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WHERE THE HIGHER CRITICISM FAILS

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BELIEFS OF UNBELIEF
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WHERE THE HIGHER CRITICISM FAILS

A Critique of the Destructive Critics

By
W. H. FITCHETT

THE METHODIST BOOK CONCERN
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BOOK I

THE POSITION OF THE HIGHER CRITICISM

"This subject (the Higher Criticism) is not only a matter for specialized experts or professional scholars. The discussion has been left in the past too much to them. Religion, after all, is for common men. It is in the region of the common reason, at least as much as in the circles of specialized study, that it must be judged. This is, most noticeably, the assumption of the New Testament. It appeals to the common judgment; it summons each man to judge for himself. 'Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?' 'Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.' These words of our Lord and of Saint Paul are a challenge to common men."—Bishop Gore in *Belief in God.*

"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."—Matthew 11. 25, 26.

"It is the experience of countless souls that where we touch Jesus we do somehow touch the real. . . . We have to understand Jesus Christ unless our universe is to be chaos."—Glover.

CHAPTER I

WHAT IS THE HIGHER CRITICISM?

What is meant by the Higher Criticism, and how is it affecting the general Christian faith? What is the attitude towards it which ought to be taken by the plain man, who has neither the scholarship nor the time to enable him to form an independent judgment on the questions it raises, but who desires to know the truth, and stands ready, at any cost, to accept the truth? Is the Higher Criticism, in brief, a folly to be ignored, an enemy to be feared, or a friend to be welcomed? These are questions which many good people are asking just now, and they are certainly questions entitled to an answer.

The "Higher Criticism," of course, is an elastic phrase which can be stretched to cover the wildest extremes of opinion and the utmost diversity of methods. It cannot be defined in a sentence, or dismissed by a phrase. It only means—or ought to mean—a scientific study of the origin, the dates, and the literary structure of the books of the Bible; and it is as legitimate a form of study as any other possible to the human mind. An intelligent Christian must be willing, not only frankly, but gladly, to accept every conclusion about the Bible which has adequate historic proof. For truth is the most precious of all things; it has absolute authority for both the conscience and

the reason. And it concerns us more to know the exact truth about God's Word than about anything else in the world. Life, and character, and eternity depend upon it.

The Higher Criticism beyond doubt has accomplished much good which deserves grateful acknowledgment; in a sense we are all "Higher Critics." We believe, for example, that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, but we do not believe he wrote the account of his own funeral with which the story closes. We believe, that is—in a wider or a narrower sense—in the composite structure of the first five books of the Bible. We have learned, again, to recognize the human element in the Bible, and the progressive nature of the revelation given in it. The things are not recent discoveries; they belong to the A B C of Christian faith. The New Testament itself, while declarring God "spoke to our fathers in time past by the prophets," adds that he spoke not only "at sundry times" but "by divers portions and in divers manners."

A mother must tell her little child the story of how the world was made in other terms than those of a science primer. She must, that is, translate the facts of science into the terms of the child's mind and imagination. The first chapters of Genesis, for this reason, are not written in terms of science and would have been unintelligible through all the centuries before science was born if they had used its language. But science deals with facts, and the first sentence in Genesis, in language which science cannot improve, declares the greatest of all facts, that *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

The Higher Criticism, again, has helped to deliver the faith of some people from the theory of an inspiration hard, mechanical, and strictly verbal; a theory which required us to believe that the mind of prophet and apostle, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, resembled nothing so much as a machine, a phonograph record, reproducing, with machine-like accuracy, certain words. We have to turn back to history to realize in what an exaggerated form this view was once held. The Declaration of the Helvetic Convention of 1675, for example, affirms that "the Hebrew text, both as regards consonants and as regards vowels—or, if not the vowel points themselves, at least the significance of the points—is divinely inspired." The mechanical and verbal theory of inspiration was refuted long since, and on literary grounds, by De Quincey, in his memorable article on "Protestantism." It is plainly inconsistent with the facts in the Bible. The quotations of passages from the Old Testament in the New Testament, for example, are marked by curious verbal freedom. Out of two hundred and seventy-five Old Testament quotations in the New Testament there are only sixty-three which agree exactly with the Hebrew; in thirty-seven cases the quotation is taken from the Septuagint, where it does not correctly render the Hebrew; there are seventy-six cases in which the correct rendering in the Hebrew has been modified; and there are ninety-nine passages in which the New Testament differs both from the original Hebrew and the Septuagint.[1]

Now all this is perfectly intelligible. Chris-

[1] *New Testament Criticism*, J. A. McClymont, D.D., p. 20.

tian faith holds that "the writers of the Bible wrote and spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"; but the inspiration under which they acted did not obliterate their human characteristics; it acted through them. The inspiration was plenary, not verbal; an inspiration which makes the Bible the one sufficient and final standard for faith and conduct. But the worship of the letter is no part of the Christian creed. And the inspiration of the Bible is continuous; it burns in the divine words to this very day, and this characteristic will mark it till the end of time. It is found there as an illuminating and verifying force by every devout reader. The belief in the composite structure of certain books of the Bible, both in the Old and the New Testament, is in no way inconsistent with the theory of their inspiration. The writers, Christian faith holds, were divinely directed in their choice of the materials used.

Yet that the Higher Criticism is to multitudes a distress and an alarm is beyond denial. There is an increasing sense in the mind of the plain man that something has happened, or is about to happen, which may imperil, or perhaps even wreck, his faith. He sees that for many people something divine—some quality of authority—has slipped out of the Bible, and some enfeebling taint of uncertainty has crept *into* the Bible. It seems indeed almost open to doubt whether for many people there will soon be any Bible left. Is there any justification for these fears? What has the Higher Criticism really done and what is it going to do? Is the day coming when there will be *two* Bibles—the Bible of the simple-hearted be-

liever and the Bible of the scholar; and can the Christian faith survive such a spectacle?

The plain man, of course, realizes that from its very nature a book like the Bible, if it does not outrun the human mind itself, yet must have heights not to be easily climbed; depths too profound, perhaps, for any human sounding line. It must have difficulties which challenge our faith; meanings for which the human mind has hardly room. How should it be otherwise? A Bible with no more mystery in it than the multiplication table has would be too trivial to *be* a Bible! And what an amazing book the actual Bible, as it lies in our hands to-day, is! All merely human literature is insignificant beside it. It has reshaped secular history; it is, visibly, the one hope of the human race. If from the civilization of to-day the Bible and all the forces which stream from it were suddenly withdrawn the world would go to wreck.

Now the mind of the average man cannot in the least understand the attitude of many, at least, of the Higher Critics towards the Bible. They seem to have forgotten history—or to have never read it—for they act as though the Bible was a book which nobody as yet has succeeded in reading; a riddle like that of the Sphinx, which twenty centuries have not solved, a message written in cipher whose key is still a secret. And we must wait—as twenty centuries have waited—with what patience we can till the present generation of Higher Critics have solved the strange riddle of the divine Book and found the key to its cipher.

They seem, in brief, in regard to the Bible to

have lost their sense of spiritual values; they resemble a committee of antiquarian experts examining a mummy discovered in some ancient tomb. They are trying to discover the exact date and structure of the tomb itself, the method, and the names of the workmen who constructed it. And all the while they miss the living forces that stream from the Bible. For the Bible is not a mummy; it is not a lay figure to be examined, weighed, classified, and quarreled over. It lives! As Luther says, it has hands and feet. The inspiration which moved the holy men of old to write these divine pages is in these pages still, and this is verified in the spiritual experience of every devout reader of the Bible.

And yet this divine Book, which has survived so many fires kindled by its enemies, seems—to some alarmed people—to be in danger at the present moment of being consumed in a fire stronger than any yet known; for it is a flame of learned criticism, and is kindled not by the enemies of the divine Book but by learned men who are its official interpreters and friends. This view, of course, is not quite accurate. Fear hardly sees things with clear eyes; and fire sometimes has a cleansing office. Many angry hammers have beaten on the Bible and they are all broken. The divine Book is indestructible! But the storm of criticism beating on the Bible at the present moment is loud, and the average man, who perhaps has had no university training and knows nothing of the Semitic languages, hears far off the tumult of learned voices in conflict about the divine Book, and thinks very naturally that in a dispute moving at a level of erudition so high he can take no

part. He can only wait till the experts have come to some agreement, no matter how long the process must take; and must accept their "conclusions" with resigned meekness. But what kind of a Bible or of a Christ will be left to him he cannot venture to guess.

And yet even in this high controversy of learned men on the Bible the unlearned man has responsibilities he dare not shun and rights he may not surrender. He has—or may have—a knowledge of the Bible and of Christ, vital, intimate, personal; a knowledge which the agreement of learned men did not give and which their disagreement need not take away. In his new book, *Belief in God,* Bishop Gore with great force argues that the plain man has his own place and a right to his own logic in this great controversy.

"It is not only a matter," he says, "for specialized experts or professional scholars. The discussion has been left in the past too much to them. Religion, after all, is for common men. It is in the region of the common reason, at least as much as in the circles of specialized study, that it must be judged. This is most noticeably the assumption of the New Testament. It appeals to the common judgment; it summons each man to judge for himself. *'Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?' 'He that is spiritual judgeth all things, and he himself is judged of no man.'* These words of our Lord and of Saint Paul are a challenge to common men."[1]

[1] *Belief in God,* John Murray, p. 20.

CHAPTER II

THE PLACE OF THE UNLEARNED IN THE CONTROVERSY

Now perhaps no words in the whole confused literature of the Higher Criticism are more significant or cut more sharply into the very heart of the great debate than those we have quoted from Bishop Gore which we here print again. The writer, it must be remembered, is a scholar of recognized standing; he is himself a Higher Critic, though of the saner kind. His freedom from tradition and his intellectual courage are shown by the place he filled in the famous *Lux Mundi* which a few years ago so disquieted many good people. No charge of being opposed to the utmost freedom, both of inquiry and of opinion on the subject of the Bible, can be possibly laid against Bishop Gore, and he here reminds us that:

"*The discussion is not only a matter for specialized experts or professional scholars; it has been left in the past too much to them. Religion, after all, is for common men. It is in the region of the common reason, at least as much as in the circle of specialized study, that it must be judged.*"

The passage we quote from his latest book, in brief, is the plea of a scholar, a thinker, and a Higher Critic—in the legitimate sense of that word—for the right of the plain man, who very

probably is not a scholar, to be heard in the great controversy on which the very fate of the Christian religion seems to hang.

"The common man," says Bishop Gore, "has been too long 'denied any place' in it." It has been taken for granted by the experts, and silently conceded, perhaps, by the "common man" himself, that in a debate on a theme so difficult the only persons who have the right to be heard are trained scholars, who are familiar with Latin and Greek and Hebrew and all the forms of the Semitic dialects, and who have spent their lives in the study of ancient manuscripts and in the criticism of each other's theories. As for the common man, his opinion can have no significance; he possesses, indeed, no right to *have* an opinion on a subject so high! On questions of scholarship the authority of scholars is final.

Now in one sense this is perfectly true and may be accepted quite frankly. But some things must be both remembered and weighed. It is perhaps irrelevant to urge that the common man has a direct and profound interest of a personal kind in this business. The questions raised by the Higher Criticism, as he understands them, cut to the very quick of his spiritual life. In some forms they disquiet his faith; they seem to give the lie to his best hopes and his deepest religious consciousness. As he sees it they rob the Bible both of its message and its authority. He is tempted to think—rightly or wrongly—that the Higher Criticism takes from him the Christ he knows and gives him a Christ whittled down into insignificance, a Christ convicted of ignorance and mistakes. The Christ of his hymns and prayers be-

neath the acid of the Higher Criticism turns out to be a mournfully unmiraculous figure!

But if all this be true, yet in this great debate —or in *any* controversy—Truth cannot be sacrificed to Pity. No interest worth having can ever be injured by the truth; truth in any realm and at any cost is the highest interest of man. But the most significant fact—and perhaps the fact most generally forgotten in the whole debate —is the fact that those conclusions of the Higher Criticism which alone disquiet Christian opinion and can alone be hostile to any Christian interest do not spring from difficulties of scholarship, difficulties of which only scholars can judge. They do not arise from the discovery, say, of flaws in the text of the Bible, or of manuscripts yet more ancient than those known when the Bible was last revised, and which give, say, some new and disturbing vision of the character and acts of Christ, and in this way threaten to wreck Christian faith. Nothing of the sort has happened.

There is a wide area of the subjects covered by the Higher Criticism controversy which comes under the authority and award not of scholarship but of plain common sense; and within that area the "common man" is himself the expert, and has the authority of the expert. In *Gulliver's Travels*, it will be remembered, Swift described for the entertainment of mankind the philosophers of Laputa and the new, scientific, and "philosophic" plan they had devised for building a house. The roof—not the foundation—had to be constructed first, in the thin air. Now the "common man" does not need himself to become a philosopher and

to graduate in some Laputan university before he is entitled to criticize the Laputan system of building houses. As a matter of fact the first roof set up on the Laputan plan, in thin air, refuted the philosophers who invented the system by tumbling on their heads. Building houses is a matter on which the common man is an expert, and all the philosophers in Laputa could not persuade him to pull down his own house and reconstruct it on a "philosophical" plan.

And the plain fact is that many of the methods used and of the "conclusions" reached by the Higher Criticism, when set in the daylight of plain sense and looked at with clear vision, are in quarrel with the fundamental reasoning instinct—the plain common sense—with its stubborn loyalty to facts set in the human soul by God Himself—set there in authority over human actions; which in its way is as authoritative as a page in the Bible, and without which the only residence for which a man is qualified is an idiot asylum. Now it can be shown that the Higher Criticism—in some of its forms, over a wide area of its literature, and many of its conclusions—is in quarrel with this fundamental reasoning instinct set in man's nature. And this fact robs of their weight exactly those of its conclusions which most disquiet Christian people, since they stand in this very category.

The Higher Criticism, of course, does not pretend to be an exact science. Science has its ascertained and verified certainties, certainties which stand good through all debates and are accepted universally as final. A controversialist who, without any special and original knowledge

of electricity, set his opinion on the subject against that of Sir Oliver Lodge, or who, knowing nothing of mathematics or physical science, undertook to argue with Professor Murray on the structure of the atom, would justly and peremptorily be dismissed from the debate.

"Medicine," says a well-known writer, "advances over the bodies of its dead theories. Each of these serves a purpose; few indeed survive beyond a limited period." For medicine is a science; theories, for it, are provisional, and are worthless except they lead to facts and are verified by facts. For every form of science aims at reaching certainties; it builds its conclusions on verified and verifiable facts. For the Fact is final; it ends debate; it holds good for all and in all disputes. But the Higher Criticism is not in the category of the exact sciences. To an extent which is not easily realized, it is a shadow dance of theories; of theories which remain theories to the end and which commonly die young. They are often both ingenious and honest theories. Sometimes, too, they are almost childish in their foolishness. But always they remain theories; any element of hard and universally admitted facts is seldom found in them. When the revision of the Authorized Version was undertaken it was the work of a confederation of the best living scholars drawn from every church. These were sub-divided into three Committees, two of the Committees doing the detailed work of revision and their results in turn being revised by the third or Supervising Committee; in this way the eccentricities of individual translators were effaced and a translation produced which

represented the agreed scholarship of the Christian faith. But imagine a similar Conference, composed of Higher Critics of varying altitudes, sitting in judgment on each other's theories! Who can imagine that any agreed finality of views over the whole area of subjects dealt with would emerge? The unwritten law of the Higher Criticism is that every critic has the right to frame the theory which best satisfies his own personal judgment. There are no central and universally admitted facts by which all theories must be true and to which all must conform. Sometimes, indeed, as in the case of the archæological discoveries of Sir William Ramsay, a bit of historic evidence which every critic must accept emerges; and in this way the conservative school of the Higher Critics has gained greatly. Sometimes, again, a flash of impatient common sense from some critic of high standing breaks through the general mist of gyrating theories and has historic effect. Thus in 1897 Harnack—one of the great scholars of our time, and a Higher Critic of fame—in his *Chronology of Ancient Christian Literature* wrote a dozen sentences which "made history." "There was a time," he said, "and the general public is still at that date, when it was considered necessary to hold the most ancient Christian literature, including the New Testament, as a tissue of deception and falsehood. That time has now passed. For science it was an episode during which she learned much and after which she has much to forget. The results of my investigations go in a reactionary sense far beyond what one might call the moderate position in the criticism of to-day. The most ancient

literature of the Church is in all chief points, and in the majority of details, veracious and worthy of belief from the point of view of literary history. In the whole New Testament there is probably only one work which can, in the strictest sense of the word, be called pseudonymous. It is 2 Peter. . . . In our criticism of the most ancient sources of Christianity, we are, without any doubt, in course of returning to tradition." Since those words, from the pen of a scholar who had himself been one of the most authoritative if not destructive critics of his day were published, the "traditional dates" of the New Testament writings ought to pass without serious challenge.

But almost every critic in turn insists in evolving his own private theory and so we descend at last to the cranks of what is called the "open-court" in America. One group of theorists there held that Jesus belonged to the Aryan race and was not a Jew at all. Another professor entered the field to prove that Jesus was not born at all, that the name "Jesus" was only a title, a Hebrew form of the Greek *soter* (Saviour), under which the Jews found Zeus, or Jupiter, worshiped by the Greeks. Yet another critic came forward to maintain that Jesus was no other than Buddha himself, clothed in Jewish Messianic apparel.[1] In the absence of any agreed method of dealing with the questions of the Higher Criticism, the universal freedom claimed by every critic to reject facts or dates or names of which he does not approve, or which do not fit in with his theories, makes the whole field of this criticism what the familiar earth would look like if the law of grav-

[1] *New Testament Criticism*, J. A. McClymont, D.D., p. 150.

itation somehow ceased to act in irregular patches on its surfaces. The literature of the Higher Criticism consists, in the main, of the criticism of each other's theories, and resembles, a cynic might suggest, the industrial occupation of the community, real or imagined, who "got their living by taking in each other's washing." The Higher Criticism, it must be repeated, knows nothing of "certainties"; it is a world of theorists and of theories. It is a realm in which no writ runs, and no authority exists, failure to recognize which means the dismissal of the person guilty of such folly from further notice. As a result a large part of the Higher Criticism is a landscape with no settled features, a witches' dance of theories and guesses which come like shadows and go like shadows: we give an example of the extravagance to which theorists go in the next chapter entitled "The 'Dancing Dervish' Variety of the Higher Criticism."

Some theories—usually those thrown up from German brains—in scale and height, in their apparent massiveness and their menacing quality, resemble the simooms, the dancing columns of hot sand, seen sometimes whirling across the desolate wastes of sand in Upper Egypt. They are but gyrating masses of hot dust, blown about by tempests of fiery winds; for a time they are very impressive but they sink back to the desolate stretch of sand-hills whence they came. Some theories—those usually of English birth—have the scale and the brief beauty of the summer clouds in an English sky, and they are as transitory as the clouds. Judged by practical common sense they have the quality and weight of

so much vapor, and like vapor a change of temperature in the atmosphere kills them. Theories are not facts and can never have the enduring qualities of facts.

Some of the methods and the conclusions of the Higher Critics, again, have only to be looked at with a reasonably quick vision of the ridiculous and the effect is deadly. The method, for example, which on the evidence of differences in literary style discovers and solemnly labels a hundred "editors," "redactors," and "compilers" in proof, say, of the composite authorship of the Pentateuch, if applied to English literature would produce a hundred Macaulays to explain his *History of England* and a thousand Shakespeares to account adequately for the difference of style in the immortal plays. The literary method in this section of Higher Criticism, as we show later, when judged by plain common sense is almost a jest. The universal assumption—an assumption absolutely unproved, and incapable of proof—which marks these theories and gives them their disquieting quality is an offense to common sense which cannot lightly be forgiven.

When again we realize on how many points there is no agreed opinion amongst the Higher Critics—that while they may make common cause against outsiders, they differ among themselves, and differ vehemently—may not common sense suggest that till these "experts" agree we cannot be sure, not only as to which of them is the true expert, but whether any of them is? For they refute each other! What spectacle, again, can be a greater shock to every instinct of awe than that of a committee of the Higher Critics gather-

ing round the figure of Christ, each with a little foot rule of his own, and all bent on dissecting the mind and soul and character of Christ and finding out where knowledge in him ends and ignorance begins, and reporting with confidence how on some subjects their own larger information is able to correct that ignorance? To worship Christ is the first and the very deepest of Christian instincts. But to weigh him in critical scales, to pluck away the veil of awe and mystery which hangs about him, to undertake to catalogue his limitations,—that surely to reverent Christian faith may well seem if not impiety, yet an offense to reason against which every instinct of common sense protests. And a great scholar like Bishop Gore—himself a true and accomplished Higher Critic—tells the world that the voice of the common man in this realm has a right to be heard and ought to have been heard earlier.

And surely what Bishop Gore says is a correspondence deep and mysterious, beyond our power to comprehend, with the words of Jesus Christ, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." [1]

[1] Matthew 11. 25, 26.

CHAPTER III

THE "DANCING DERVISH" VARIETY OF THE HIGHER CRITICISM

In its widest sense the "Higher Criticism" takes in the theories and speculations of every one, who, taking the Bible as his subject, whether to defend it or to attack it, chooses to describe himself as a Higher Critic; but much of it is a literature which has no serious meaning and on which no serious thought need be spent. We venture to give an example of the literature of the Higher Criticism of the wilder type, which the common sense of the plain man may peremptorily dismiss from notice as pure nonsense which needs no notice.

In a recent number of the Hibbert Journal is an article by Professor Preserved Smith, a well-known American scholar, entitled "A New Light on the Relations of Peter and Paul." It consists of about seventeen pages filled with a sort of witches' dance of unbelieving "explanations" of the New Testament, of semi-lunatic guesses, of things taken for granted which ought to be proved, of specious and absolutely unverified statements. And the article is not solitary; it is the type of a literature. If Professor Preserved Smith's version of the gospel is true—and he is a scholar of reputation—of course it must be accepted. The truth first and always; the truth

though the heavens fall! But as a matter of fact it is only a splutter of foolish ink, without a tincture of either sense or fact in it, cast lightly on the sacred pages of the Bible. In all the seventeen pages which leave us spiritually bankrupt scarcely a sentence of sober or reasoned argument can be discovered. What does such an article in that case deserve? And that this is really the case let the plain man judge from a brief analysis of this particular article.

Professor Preserved Smith undertakes to show that the two stories which discredit Peter—his attempt to "rebuke" Christ and his denial of Christ—are pure inventions, and grew out of the fact that Peter and Paul had totally different readings of the gospel. Peter denied the fact of the passion and of all the incidents of the passion and on some occasion he stated his view to Paul. To him this naturally seemed the very denial of his Lord. "As the conversation continued, or at other times took another turn," says Preserved Smith with a calm certainty, as though he had been present, "Peter, with great emphasis, said, 'I know not this man of whom you speak.'" He meant "the man" who was condemned by the high priests, crucified by Pilate, and who rose again from the dead. Peter knew nothing—that is, we are asked to believe—of the trial of Christ, of his crucifixion, or of his resurrection. Now to Paul this was equivalent to the direct denial of the Lord, and we are assured by Professor Preserved Smith "he passed the anecdotes on to the faithful Mark, the evangelist, who wrote them in the form in which we have them, and placed them, one at the first mention of the passion and

the other at the crucifixion itself." So we are invited to believe on the private authority of Preserved Smith that the story of Peter's denial of Christ is "a Pauline scandal." What Peter was really guilty of is a vaster "denial" still, a denial of the passion. "It is now generally recognized by liberal scholars," says Professor Preserved Smith, "that considerable portions of the gospel are unhistoric." Loisy, it seems, "has demonstrated" that the fourth Gospel is unhistoric. "If it were possible," argues Preserved Smith, "thus to write, and get accepted as historical, what may be described (without offense, I hope) as a fictitious life of Jesus, what guarantee have we that the early evangelists were not equally free in their methods?" "Since Strauss," he says, "it has been the fashion to disregard the miracles." Loisy, he assures us, describes Luke as "not a scrupulous historian," and "it is quite probable that Mark invented an anecdote in the interests of a theory." Solomon Reinach, it seems, "argues strongly against accepting the passion as a fact"; and another Smith—W. P., this time—has proposed "an immensely clever hypothesis to account for the whole gospel story" without giving any place to the historicity of the central Figure.

There is no pretense of *proving* these conclusions. It is "the fashion" to disregard the miracles; it is "quite probable" that Mark lied. Somebody has proposed "an immensely clever hypothesis," which dismisses Christ from history. "That Jesus should predict his death at the hands of the chief priests," we are told, "is 'a plain anachronism.'" It is not disproved that Christ

made that prediction; it is quietly taken for granted that he could not make it. The whole story of Peter's denial is dismissed as "intrinsically improbable." The difference between Paul and Peter, it seems, arose out of the circumstance that Paul invented the story that Christ was crucified and rose from the dead; but while he "knew nothing save Christ and him crucified," the Church at Jerusalem apparently knew much else of Christ but nothing of this. It had never heard, it seems, of the cross and of the empty grave in the garden! No critic, we are told, will trust the Acts of the Apostles. That book "is so apologetic that it does not hesitate to distort the facts in the interest of piety."

But is it credible that the cross is a late Pauline invention and that the Church of Jerusalem knew nothing about it? Paul invented the fable of the crucifixion and published it everywhere, though the entire population of Jerusalem must have known it was a lie. We cannot get Peter's opinion on the subject; through his letters certainly runs, like some crimson thread, the story of the Christ who "bore our sins in his own body on the tree"; but his letters, Professor Preserved Smith assured us, are "late, spurious, and Paulinized." James, too, we are told, "apparently knows nothing of the passion of Jesus." That portion of Mark's Gospel labeled "Q" knows absolutely nothing of it. The vehemence with which Paul declares he "knew nothing save Christ and him crucified," we are invited to believe, is "suspicious." It looks as if he "knew he was introducing a novel conception," which must be urged with more vigor in proportion as it was strange. "Scholars,"

says Preserved Smith, "are coming to see ever more clearly" that Paul's central doctrine, in a word, has no historic fact behind it.

"The decisive element in Paul's consciousness," at the moment he "set up his own mystically evolved" notion of Christ's passion and death, we are told, ". . . was assuredly a primitive and widespread vegetation or initiation myth of the dying and rising God, common to both Oriental religions and to the Greeks." So the cross is dismissed. It is the sole invention of Paul, and he stole it from an Oriental myth! Luke, of course, was in the conspiracy with Paul; and "any one who compares Luke with his sources," says Professor Preserved Smith, "must be convinced that he omitted, altered, added, with an utter disregard of history, as the facts contradicted his idea of edification." But Preserved Smith invents the delightful theory that there was "a treaty" betwixt Paul and Peter, by which "the territory was divided into spheres of influence in which each might propagate his own ideas." "Probably," he says, "Peter and his friends cared little what Paul taught so long as he taught only the heathen, with whom they would have nothing to do"; and the tolerance of the new fictitious gospel was made easier by "Paul's promise to send money to the saints at Jerusalem."

Here, then, is a form of the Higher Criticism which is more exquisitely ridiculous—since it takes itself seriously—than Whately's famous essay designed to prove that Napoleon was a myth; and, it may be added, it is more deadly than any form of open infidelity. In our hymns and prayers and worship to-day we are simply

inheriting and repeating the "widespread initiation or vegetation idolatry of an Oriental religion." Was ever so much accomplished by so little? The sermon on Mars Hill, when with the white-columned Parthenon above him and the waters of Salamis gleaming in the distance before him Paul told an Athenian audience that "the times of their ignorance God winked at, but now commanded all men everywhere to repent," is a bit of immortal literature. But Professor Preserved Smith has discovered that in the act and moment of that great discourse, Paul was preaching the very idolatry he rebuked! When he "preached Jesus and the resurrection," he was only offering these Athenians a weed plucked from the ancient and decaying swamp of their own heathenism. Paul did not know this.

The listening Athenians did not know it; they failed to recognize their own native myth. But Professor Preserved Smith, listening through his ear-trumpet across twenty stormy centuries, is not to be deceived. He knows better! Paul is really preaching Dionysus, a not too decent divinity of Greek mythology; the "youthful, beautiful, but effeminate god of wine," to quote the classical dictionaries, the deity known to Roman satirists and to bibulous modern poets as Bacchus.

As Professor Preserved Smith, through his spectacles, contemplates the midnight scene in Gethsemane, the bowed figure of Christ, with the red blood-drops on his brow, it becomes to him nothing but a vegetation myth translated into personal terms. All the emotions of awe and reverence, of adoring love and faith, which that

scene has awakened in the hearts of the saints of twenty centuries—and still awakens—are only a bit of disguised Bacchus-worship. And all this is published in the Hibbert Journal, and there is nobody with wit enough to see, or at least with courage to say, "This is not scholarship, still less is it common sense. It is pure rubbish." Not one grain of rational evidence, it must be repeated, is offered in support of these monstrous "conclusions." They are offered to us as being "probably true," as being "reasonable guesses," as being "generally recognized by liberal scholars." For twenty centuries Christianity has offered to mankind an Oriental vegetation myth under the delusion that it was a Divine Saviour who had entered into the life of men for their salvation. Our hymn-books, of course, would have to be reconstructed, for instead of the cross and the redeeming love behind the cross we should see, leering at us from every page, a peeping and obscene god of heathen mythology; a Bacchus astride a barrel and crowned with vine leaves.

Now the plain man knows that all this is nonsense, and he knows it with a certainty surer than any knowledge which reaches him through the senses. What a reassuring experience it is after an hour in the literary company—say of Professor Preserved Smith—to read one of the great Psalms, into whose cadences are woven the experiences of a hundred generations of saints; or Paul's Hymn of Praise to Love, or the opening sentences of Peter's letter to "the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," with their stately march of resounding syllables: "Blessed be the God and

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"; or John's angel voice pleading, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God." Or better still, to hear Christ's voice speaking across the centuries, "Abide in me and I in you."

These great passages prove themselves. The air of eternity seems to breathe through every syllable. They have an atmosphere as clean as that which lies on Alpine snows; a white purity as of a chrysolite; a light such as never was on sea or shore. Above all, there is in them an authority which runs back into eternity for its source, and to which our deepest spiritual nature answers with the authority and certainty of our instinct.

It would be, of course, a monstrous injustice to hold critics—the saner critics of to-day—men like Dr. Foakes Jackson, Professor Peake, Professor James Moffatt, or H. D. Major, responsible for this nonsense. They are incapable of forgiving it, still less of producing it. But the Higher Criticism is responsible for its cranks; it grows them! it fails to refute them! Professor Preserved Smith's article is an example of the degree in which whole sections of literature of the Higher Criticism fails at the point of mere saving common sense. It may be dismissed with a gesture.

BOOK II

THE BIBLE

"If the universe is rational the distinction between right and wrong must be clear, definite, reliable, . . . otherwise human life is the voyage of a derelict, without chart, or helm, or port."—Glover.

"By all that he requires of me
I know what God himself must be."

INTRODUCTION

The Higher Criticism, in its British form at least, fails, among other reasons, because on three subjects—subjects which go to the very heart of the Christian faith, and by which indeed that faith stands or falls—it talks with two voices. In regard to them it cannot quite make up its mind; it tries to walk in two opposite directions at the same moment of time, a feat which no pair of human legs, theological or other, has yet succeeded in doing. These three subjects are:

(1) The Bible: Can it be accepted as an authoritative standard of religious truth?

(2) Miracles: Are those recorded in the New Testament to be regarded as historically true?

(3) The Person and Nature of Jesus Christ: Is he the Incarnate Son of God in the sense in which the Nicene Creed recites it; " . . . God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten and not made . . . by whom all things were made: Who for us men and our salvation came down from heaven. . . ."?

On these three great questions the Higher Criticism resembles Bunyan's Mr. Facing-Both-Ways, who, we are told, "was a water-man, and got his living by looking one way and going the other."

Now as regards the British Higher Criticism it is perhaps unfair to generalize, for it cannot be classified; it has no distinct and what may be called corporate existence. In German theology —on the subject of the miraculous in particular

—there was always some school or some commanding and representative figure which might be fairly taken as representative of the religious thought and scholarship of Germany on these subjects. Opinion on them ran like a visible stream between recognized banks; it was possible to say what was the state of the German theological mind on these subjects. It is not so with what we have called the British form of the Higher Criticism. It has no distinct schools and though the general standard of scholarship is good there is no figure entitled to speak for the whole movement.

At the present moment, however, the Modernists in the Church of England are taking a definite and visible form and have a certain representative value; while among what are called the Free Churches Professor Peake, a Christian scholar of standing, has just published a Commentary on the Bible, with a list of sixty-one contributors, all with a certain claim to scholarship. In a strict sense the book has no representative value; each writer in it is responsible for his own contribution, and takes no responsibilty for the other writers; but Professor Peake himself claims that the book gives—or rather "is designed to give"—"the generally accepted results of Biblical criticism, interpretation, history, and theology." This is, on the part of Professor Peake himself, we venture to think, a too enthusiastic description of his Commentary, but it supplies a reason for taking, for our purpose, what is published in the Commentary as a fair representation of at least one shade of British Higher Criticism.

CHAPTER I

WHERE IS RELIGIOUS CERTAINTY TO BE FOUND

The Higher Criticism, as we have said, fails at some of the most important points because in regard to them it talks with two voices; it endeavors to travel in two opposite directions at the same moment. Its symbol, as far as these subjects are concerned, is Bunyan's Mr. Facing-Both-Ways. In Peake's Commentary, for example, Dr. E. Griffith-Jones, the Principal of the United College, Bradford, discusses the question of the supposed authority of the Bible as the ultimate standard of religious truth; and speaking for the Higher Criticism he undertakes to define where, for simple men, that "ultimate standard of religious truth" is to be found. No subject, of course, can be more important than this. In the waste of perilous seas what, for the captain of the ship, is more important than the accuracy of his charts and the reliability of his compass? The whole interval between shipwreck and safety depends on them.

Now the position of the Higher Criticism on this subject could find no more persuasive advocate than Principal Griffith-Jones. He is a scholar, a thinker; his English is beautiful; his sentences flow with the music as of a running

stream in them. He is, personally, a sincere Christian, and when he tells us that "it is the testimony of the Christian conscience in all ages that to find Jesus is to find God," it is clear that he has this divine experience, this personal knowledge of a personal Christ; though it may be suspected that this high experience had its origin in a period when the Higher Criticism was for Principal Griffith-Jones a realm as yet unknown and untrodden. But he keeps that great experience still and no one will doubt the sincerity of his Christian faith.

To the question: "What is the authoritative standard of religious truth?" every church is bound to give an answer and may be judged by the answer it gives. Principal Griffith-Jones, for his part, begins by saying that such an authority "can be found only in the revealed will of God," a proposition which everybody will gladly accept. He then proceeds to open up a very wide field of debate on the various forms in which, and the channels through which, that priceless knowledge comes.

He deals first with the claim of the mystic. The mystic rejects all appeal to external authority; the conscience, he holds, can only be illuminated from within, and he claims to reach the knowledge of God by means of "the inner light." Principal Griffith-Jones compliments the mystics on "the priceless services rendered by them to religion." "They are right," he says, "in claiming the possibility of an immediate vision of the divine," but their method, he thinks, is "too subjective in character." "Mysticism," in his conclusion, "is one way of coming into fruitful touch with the

divine realities, though it is not the only way nor is it a sure way; it is too subjective in character" (p. 7). Principal Griffith-Jones, it will be seen, balances on his tight-rope gracefully and with skill. At the climax of his argument it will be found his own way of attaining this priceless knowledge bears a surprising resemblance to that of the mystic.

Next the claim of the church is discussed, and Principal Griffith-Jones holds that the church has the advantage over mysticism, in that "she expresses the collective consciousness of believers," a really splendid compliment which would satisfy —and perhaps even astonish—the proudest Pope who ever sat in the Vatican. Then comes the other note: the church "has failed as an infallible source of divine knowledge"; she "has never really spoken at one time with consentient voice," not even, apparently, when she was expressing "the collective consciousness of believers." The church is dismissed with the argument that as she did not create the Bible she is not an infallible authority on religious truth; such an authority no doubt exists, but it is to be found elsewhere than in the church.

Then comes the Protestant claim, that this authority is to be found in the Bible, the divinely inspired record of the spiritual training of our race and of the revelation of himself God has made through inspired men, and by the acts and teaching of Jesus Christ. In this, all Protestants claim, is to be found the ultimate standard of religious truth. Principal Griffith-Jones deals with this claim promptly and firmly. "For centuries," he admits, "it was possible to hold this

theory with sincerity and with confidence"; and what has happened since to destroy that faith? Here Principal Griffith-Jones consults his Higher Criticism and is able to make short work of the Protestant claims. "The rise of historical and linguistic criticism," he says, "has finally destroyed these claims" (p. 8). It is not explained *how* this remarkable fact was accomplished but the fact, it seems, is beyond denial. The Protestant Bible is more completely wrecked as a standard of authority than the dream of the mystic or of the arrogant claim of the Roman Catholic. It is "destroyed, and destroyed finally," a circumstance which of course leaves it without hope of resurrection. Nothing remains except to bury the corpse and dry our tears. At this point, however, Principal Griffith-Jones pulls out the other stop in his brain and proceeds to explain that the corpse is really not dead. When all the claims of the Bible to be a standard of religious truth are destroyed, and even "destroyed finally," this, the reader is assured, "of course does not mean" what it certainly said, that "the Bible is devoid of authority for the discovery and exposition of the divine mind and will" (p. 8). "It still remains an incontrovertible because experimental truth that out of the Bible a Divine Voice speaks; and when the authentic accent of that voice comes home to us we cannot for a moment doubt that we are face to face with the ultimate authority over the human soul" (p. 8).

A corpse in and through which the divine mind speaks is a somewhat puzzling conception, nor does Principal Griffith-Jones help to clear the confusion by saying that "this"—the existence of

a Divine Voice which speaks from the Bible with such authoritative accents—"is quite other than affirming the infallible authority of the Bible as a written revelation." The Book, like the church and the mystic, points to some one beyond itself. But what a confusion of metaphors and of meanings we have here! What more exactly opposite statements can be imagined? Can a thing both be and not be at the same time? A Divine Voice speaks from the Bible—even after it is dead—Principal Griffith-Jones admits; and when the authoritative accents of that voice reach to us, "we cannot, of course, for a moment doubt that we are face to face with the ultimate authority on religious truth"; and what more than this has the Protestant faith about the Bible ever claimed? If Principal Griffith-Jones discusses the Protestant faith about the Bible he must take it in the sense in which Protestants themselves hold it. They do not believe that the divine authority of the Bible resides in the cover of the book, nor even in the printed characters on the pages. They recognize that the divine essence of the Bible is the Inspiring and Interpreting Spirit of God which uses it as a channel; an Influence and a Presence, flowing through it as the waters of a stream flow within its banks.

But Principal Griffith-Jones proceeds to consider whether those who claim "that the value of the Bible lies in the fact that it contains the revelation of the Son of God, who is himself the ultimate authority for Christian believers," are correct, and he concedes that this, "properly understood, is a profound truth." He adds: "It is the testimony of the Christian consciousness in all

ages that to find Jesus is to find God. Beyond him we cannot go in our search for the Eternal, who in him has spoken his will as in no one else." This is finely said; and here then, at last, surely our search is ended. To what or to whom shall we go beyond the living Christ in search of an authoritative standard of religious truth? At this point, however, Principal Griffith-Jones proceeds once more to consult what may be called the Higher Critical side of his brain. "This claim for the ultimate character of the divine revelation of Jesus Christ," he warns us, "is sometimes affirmed in a way difficult any longer to accept," and he proceeds quite cheerfully to set in order the reasons—they make a formidable list—which forbid us to accept even Jesus Christ as the authoritative source of religious truth.

His analysis of the limitations of Christ is a melancholy bit of literature which is discussed at length elsewhere in these pages. It consists of the statements that Jesus was "a Jew of the first century," with the culture and outlook on life which belonged to that age; he "knew little or nothing of Greek philosophy or of Roman law." As for his teaching, "it is impossible to prove in any particular case that we have his *ipsissima verba*," since he wrote nothing. He is clearly in error on some questions of history. We have no strictly contemporaneous record of his life and teaching. "It is only when we come to him for light on the nature of God, whose redeeming grace is willing to help us, that we discover in Jesus a revelation, a saving power, which finds its corroboration to-day as in all ages since the days of the flesh in the triumphant experiences of believ-

ing men and women" (p. 8). This seems to give us something solid for our feet; but even when he has reached this point Principal Griffith-Jones again hedges. We are "free to exercise a sane judgment on the applicability of many of Christ's maxims for our own time." We can sit in judgment, that is, on Christ's teachings, and correct them by our "saner" opinion.

At this stage Principal Griffith-Jones stops, and the bewildered reader will have to ask, Where, after all, is the authoritative standard of religious truth to be found? Principal Griffith-Jones, it seems, finds it in the depths of his own subjective consciousness, in "the experience of redemption, peace, and joy which comes from the knowledge of Jesus Christ." This deep and sacred experience is no doubt, for one who knows it, decisive; but there are some questions which still clamor for an answer. Principal Griffith-Jones must have accepted the authority of the written record of the Bible concerning Jesus Christ and his redeeming work *before* that subjective spiritual consciousness awoke in him of which he speaks. Now which of these two factors in his spiritual experience was the cause, which the effect? Principal Griffith-Jones did not *first* experience that inward joy, and *then* believe in the gospel recorded in the Bible. Faith in the truth of the written revelation must have *preceded* in the order of time the blissful subjective consciousness of which Principal Griffith-Jones speaks; for the effect cannot precede the cause. And so the written record, which we were informed so confidently had been "finally destroyed," emerges triumphantly—though Principal Griffith-Jones

does not see it, and would be unwilling to say it—as an ultimate force in religion.

It is clear, it may be added, that the subjective spiritual experience, of which Principal Griffith-Jones speaks in such glowing tones, holds good for himself but certainly is no authority for those who do not possess it. On his reading of the problem—it is the reading of his version of the Higher Criticism—there is no authoritative standard of religious truth possible for any man but that which he can find in his own consciousness; and for one who is without this inner feeling no authoritative standard of religious truth exists. Surely a distressing, not to say a deplorable, conclusion! It may be asked, too, in what does this subjective mood of his own consciousness, on which Principal Griffith-Jones rests as an authoritative standard of religious truth, differ from the "inner light" of the mystic, "which we have been assured at the outset was untrustworthy"?

It is clear that a psychological puzzle of a very curious sort lies in what may be called the mind of the Higher Criticism as represented by Principal Griffith-Jones. It would be both unjust and absurd to suspect the perfect sincerity of Principal Griffith-Jones, but his logic certainly has the characteristic of looking one way and going another. His article is an example of the habit of talking on a single subject with two voices, which we have said characterizes so much of the literature of a certain type of the Higher Criticism. In his search for the authoritative standard of religious truth he certainly delivers himself of two opposite verdicts on each of the points discussed.

In his silvery and transparent English he makes a statement on one side so clear and so persuasive that it seems final; he then draws round it a nimbus of admiring words, and the reader feels that here is finality reached, and reached at a step. The next moment we are offered, in English equally pellucid and soothing, an almost exactly opposite statement; and it, too, in its turn, is padded and recommended to our acceptance by a chain of admiring adjectives. At the end of the whole process the astonished reader discovers that while he was looking east he was, as a matter of fact, traveling west. The very proposition—that of the mystics—against which we are warned at the beginning of Principal Griffith-Jones' argument, is almost precisely that which under a slightly different name survives and is recommended at the end. The explanation of this, we venture to suggest, is that Principal Griffith-Jones keeps his simple and adoring Christian faith and his variety of the Higher Criticism in separate compartments both of his memory and of his intelligence. He can see a totally different landscape and speaks quite a different language as he employs one or the other as the lens through which he studies any question. When the captain of a ship takes an observation of the sun at noon to learn what is the exact position of his ship, he sails in a sense by the arithmetic of the stars. Principal Griffith-Jones in his scheme of spiritual navigation adjusts the eternal stars to the ticking of his wristlet watch.

CHAPTER II

THE BIBLE AS A MORAL CODE

In the literature of the Higher Criticism, as its wiser friends will admit with a sigh, an absurdly disproportionate amount of ink is often spent on the comparatively little things and a tragical blindness to the great things in the Bible; and this is particularly the case in dealing with the Old Testament writings. These are treated as though they were documents, say, in a Chancery suit and their validity depended on the dates upon which they were written and on the identification of the persons who wrote them. Who that understands anything of literature will not sigh—or smile—as he watches the expenditure of ink and toil and learning spent on tearing up the oldest documents of the Bible into tiny fragments and discovering or inventing the writer to whom by the single test of style each fragment is to be assigned? The Old Testament Scriptures, as far as the critics can effect it, emerge in a very ragged condition from the process. Deuteronomy, for example—the book which has perhaps more of spiritual force in it than any other book in the Pentateuch, and from which Jesus Christ himself quoted most—emerges robbed of spiritual value and branded as a forgery. Canon Barnes, to judge by what he has written and preached, apparently thinks the Old Testament begins at

Amos; he is never weary of calling attention to what he thinks is its deplorably unscientific character. He cannot forgive the writer of Genesis for not writing his account of the creation of the world in language which the President of the British Association of to-day would use.

But a graver defect in the literature of the Higher Criticism is the curious blindness shown to what is the unique distinction of the Pentateuch, and the surest mark of its divine inspiration—the fact that alone of all the sacred books of the world it not only reveals God as being himself a God of righteousness; it gives a plan of human duties, framed by the mind of God, made imperative by his authority and reflecting, though in rude terms, his character. This—a scheme of human duties set in relationship to God—is the great thing, the unique thing, in the opening pages of the Bible. Classic Greece, in the golden age of its literature, with Æschylus and Sophocles as its dramatists, Plato and Aristotle as its thinkers, and Socrates as its conscience, knew nothing of deities who made morality imperative on human life, or who, indeed, had any morals of their own. It is exactly the same with the gods of imperial Rome. As Pope's familiar couplet describes them, they were

> "Gods, changeful, partial, passionate, unjust,
> Whose attributes were rage, revenge, and lust."

If the gods of Greece and Rome took human form and came among us to-day we should have to send for the police; the jail or the hangman's rope would be their inevitable fate. Perhaps the

best moralists Rome produced were Seneca and Marcus Aurelius, "the Cæsar of the changeless face."

Much admiring ink has been spent on Seneca and perhaps no man had ever greater opportunities—or failed in them more tragically. He was the tutor of Nero as a lad, became his prime minister when his pupil became emperor, and gained enormous wealth in that post. He united in himself the functions of a moralist and an apologist for the crimes of Nero. The dreadful letter he wrote to the Senate explaining why Nero had murdered his mother sufficiently illustrates his quality as a moralist. There was a certain half-pathetic sincerity in Seneca which makes some of his critics kind to his faults, but Carlyle describes him with cruel accuracy as "perhaps the niceliest proportioned half and half, the plausiblest Plausible on record, studying to serve well with Philosophy and not ill with Nero."

Among pagan characters again, Marcus Aurelius shines with a pale and melancholy luster; "the Cæsar of the changeless face." Renan described the diary of Marcus, *The Book of the Thoughts*, as "a genuine and eternal gospel," which "would never grow old, as it affirms no dogma." Renan himself, when he wrote that, had parted company with the Christian gospel. It had "grown old," he said, "in certain parts. Science no longer allows us to admit the naïve description of the supernatural which is its base. Yet science might destroy God and the soul, and *The Book of the Thoughts* would remain young in its life and truth." But, somehow, "science" has not "destroyed God"; it has only made his signa-

ture on everything more legible. And what more cruel verdict could be passed on the philosophy of Marcus Aurelius than the claim that it would exactly suit a state of things from which both God and the soul had been expelled! As Glover puts it in his fine work, *The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empires*, "Renan is right. When science or anything else 'destroys God and the soul' there is no gospel but that of Marcus, and yet for man it is impossible; and it is not young, it is senile." Duty without enthusiasm, hope, or belief—what is that worth to man? How will it serve us in the shock and strain of life? It has never served or saved men. "The world," says Glover, "did not accept Marcus as a teacher. Men readily recognized his high character, but for a thousand years and more nobody dreamed of taking him as a guide." Stoicism, in fact, died with Marcus Aurelius. It failed to capture its own century.

The character of Marcus Aurelius, however, had a certain fatigued and melancholy beauty about it. Marcus himself is described by F. W. Myers as "the saint and exemplar of Agnosticism." He was a man who "neither believed nor disbelieved," and therefore he was tragically ineffective. He "did not believe enough to be great." Even in the realm of conduct he was ineffective. He was the husband of Faustina, a crowned courtesan; his sons were vile beyond words. He hated vice, but there was not enough flame in his hate to burn vice up. He condoned it or ignored it. His creed was the essence of melancholy. He found "decay in the substance of all things. He resolved the visible universe into

nothing but water, dust, bones, and stench." Marcus Aurelius disbelieved in oracles and yet he threw two lions with spices into the Danube because an oracle assured him he would win a great victory by doing so. But the lions, being flung into the river, swam ashore on the further bank and the victory fell to the Germans. On the name of Marcus Aurelius, it may be added, lies the shame of two great persecutions of the Christians of his day. In that of 166 A. D., Polycarp perished; in that of 177 A. D., Irenæus died. Christianity supplied the victims—saintly men, tender women, and even little children—and Marcus Aurelius supplied the flames, the swords, the lions, by which they perished. And in the judgment of some the figure of the Christ of the Gospel, who inspired these saints, "pales" when set against the figure of the Roman emperor who slew them!

Laws of conduct framed by God and made imperative by his will were the starting-point and still are the one condition of all effective morality, and this fact carries with it some implications of infinite importance. A code which represents God's ideals of human conduct must carry with it a revelation of his own character, for we cannot suppose that God can impose on his creature a different—still less a *higher*—morality than his own. And the conclusion is inevitable that these homely duties, which fit so exactly and with such blessed results into our commonplace lives, must be—translated into the terms of his own nature—the conditions on which God acts. This will be seen—perhaps with less shock to the imagination—if we take an illustration from the New

Testament. Christ, for example, told Peter that the measure of the forgiveness he must extend to one who wronged him was not to seven times but to seventy times seven; and if God requires his creatures to forgive each other on the "seventy times seven" scale, is it thinkable that he will limit his forgiving grace to the "seven times" scale? In the parable of the Good Samaritan, again, we have the grace of pity—the scale of human duty when challenged by human need—as God defines it. The priest "passed by" the figure of the man lying wounded and robbed "on the other side"; the Levite, with peeping curiosity, came near the fallen man to examine his wounds and then he too "passed on." The Samaritan alone obeyed the law of pity and did it with effort and cost to himself. Which of the three figures —the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan—can we imagine best represents God and what God will do? The Samaritan's act and his homely form of service to the wounded man—his wine and oil, his two pennies—when multiplied into the scale of infinity explain the redeeming work of Jesus—the bloody sweat of Gethsemane, the dying anguish of his Cross, the broken grave of his resurrection.

Let it be realized again how human life itself is lifted up to heights of meaning and sacredness beyond imagination when its homely duties are set in relation to God, reflect his will, are enforced by his infinite authority, and will be rewarded by his loving bounty. Science teaches us that the physical universe is a unit; the wild flower in the grass has relations with the sun, ninety-three million miles distant, and borrows

its color from it; the wheeling planets determine the march of the seasons, and so our daily bread catches their rhythm. And the spiritual universe, too, is a unit, and that is why our human ethics must be in rhythm with the moral ideals of the infinite Ruler of all its orders and ranks.

But it may be asked, Can we imagine the Infinite God stooping to a task so lowly, to frame a code of duty for our human lives—lives so petty in scale, so brief in span? Science, however, shows that God is as wonderful in the infinitesimal as he is in the infinite. Nothing is too great for him and nothing too lowly. In the microscopic atom—the ultimate form of matter, too small for our senses to grasp—he hides a cluster of infinitesimal points of flame, a reflex of the Pleiades, wheeling in microscopic courses like the courses of the planets in the vastness of illimitable space. And God's wonders in the spiritual order are at least as manifold as those he works in the physical realm.

For God it must be a necessity, imposed alike by his love and his justice, that he shall complete the environment of our nature by giving it a divinely framed code of conduct. Man is something more than an animal; he belongs to the ethical order and God has set deep in his nature that mysterious force we call conscience, with its vision of right and wrong, its power to warn, to punish. Shall not God, who has planted this faculty in our nature, give to it the law which is the standard by which it judges? Man's nature is so made that without a religion it droops and withers, and shall he who made the soul on this pattern mock his own handiwork by denying it

that which is the condition of its happiness? To say that God cannot do it is to impeach his power. It assumes that he who made the tongue cannot himself speak, or will not. He who formed the brain has left himself no organ by which he can speak to man's mind. He who gave us reason and speech is lower than his own creatures. We can speak to each other, but he cannot, or will not, speak to us. But to say that God *could* give us a code of conduct but has not done it is to impeach his goodness. For he who erected in man's soul the conscience and has denied to it the revelation of a moral law cannot himself be a moral being. He made the soul for religion as he made the eye for light, and yet he has withheld the revelation which makes religion possible. No organ is found all through nature without its corresponding element. The eye presupposes light, and light waits for it. What a mockery the lungs would be if found in a world that refused them air; or the ear in an atmosphere incapable of transmitting sound! Physical nature, even though it be, as Tennyson describes it, "red in tooth and claw," has no such cruel and confounding riddles. But the highest thing the created universe knows, the soul of man, is exactly such a cruel riddle. It was made for the knowledge of God, but God has denied that knowledge and shut up his creature in a darkness that makes only blind guesses possible. It makes Christ an impostor. This, in brief, is a theory which denies pity to God and hope to man.

"If the universe," says Glover, "is rational, the distinction between right and wrong must be clear, definite, reliable, . . . otherwise human

life is the voyage of a derelict, without chart, or helm, and without a port." But God has not left life without divine direction, nor his universe so threaded with law throughout the whole kingdom of matter without any element of law in morals. The universe *is* rational; happiness for moral beings depends on agreement with the ideals of the Creator. And the laws of conduct which God imposes on us are a revelation—in practical terms —of his own character. This makes their sacredness, their beauty, their resistless claim to obedience. Written in what we are sometimes tempted in our folly to think is the iron alphabet of law, they are yet that sacred thing, a revelation not only of God's will but of his character:

> "By all that he requires of me
> I know what God himself must be."

CHAPTER III

COULD THE HUMAN MIND FRAME A PERFECT CODE?

How perfect is the code of laws laid by a Divine Hand upon us! In its earliest form it is level to the understanding of a child, a chain of simple prohibitions—"Thou shalt not"—and the safety of human society stands on those divinely framed negatives. They put the guard of God's authority and power round the social order, round life, and property, and character, and home.

But what are called the Ten Commandments are only the first line in the great law of duty which God lays on us. In its full development it takes the master-force of love and translates all duty into its terms; and this gives to duty its all-comprehending quality. It is the glory of the Bible, its deep and eternal distinction, the quality which separates it from the religious codes of all other religions, that it puts conduct under the direction not so much of a code of minute regulations but under the empire of spiritual forces. "*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*"; here are seven words, and it is impossible to specify any human relation that would not be made sweet, or any human act which would not be robbed of every element of evil, if ruled by the spirit of those seven divine words. And it is easy to see why love fulfills all the many far-reaching offices

of law; how it gives purity to every motive. It is in a sense a force universal and eternal; it is the very nature of God, for he is Love. And it is by this he binds us to himself as well as to each other; for the ethical universe, like the physical universe, is a unit. "Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" is the first and great commandment. If such a love exists between a human soul and God all the relations and duties of human life that run Godward—and they are highest of all—are perfect. And the force which makes perfect our relations with God makes perfect, too, our relations with our fellow beings. Let us imagine a town in which love linked together with its own deep and enduring strength all its inhabitants. In such a town the police would have no office, law courts would be unnecessary, no jail need be built, no door would require a key, there would be no strikes, no divorce courts. Yes! Love is the fulfilling of all laws.

And who will challenge the beauty and the effectiveness of the divine law? Always the morality —not of Christians, alas! but of Christianity—is the best evidence of its divine origin and quality. Its ideal of life shines above men's eyes as the stars do and it can as little be dimmed or displaced as the stars. The instinctive conscience of the race everywhere and always countersigns, though in bitter self-condemnation, its laws. Skeptics have attacked everything else in Christianity—its evidences, its history, its philosophy, its miracles, its dogmas—but its morality has always silenced them. They cannot improve it;

they dare not reject it. Those who have fled furthest, and with most of bitter recoil, from Christianity as a scheme of doctrine have had to come back to it for a morality. To quote Goldwin Smith, not himself a very orthodox Christian, "The fundamental principles of morality were enunciated by an unscientific peasant of Galilee, who died upon the cross eighteen centuries ago!"

It is true that men of distinguished ability who, somehow, have either never had or have lost their faith in the Christian faith, have drawn up plans for human society other than those found in the Bible. But when conscience in rhythm with the will of God disappears, what can take its place? Shall it be the "utility" of John Stuart Mill; the "persistent instinct, innate or partly acquired," of Darwin; the "conduciveness to happiness" of Herbert Spencer; the "utterance of the public spirit of the race" of Leslie Stephen; the "effect of social rules enforced by penalty" of Professor Bain? Bentham says that the very word "ought" *ought* to be banished from human language! But suppose it is banished, what remains to govern conduct? Is it utility? "Who," asks Martineau, "was ever known to make himself a martyr to truth in order to taste the pleasures of heroism?" Is it social law? This varies with climate and latitude and longitude. Slavery is a social law on the Congo; the bowstring in Constantinople; wife-killing in Annam. Is "Nature" to supply us with a moral standard? This is to reduce us to the level of swine. "Nature," says Renan, "has no regard for chastity." The rare and fine spirits of our race, touched by what is rarest and finest in the Christian atmosphere they breathe, may

keep on the highlands of morality. But what of the selfish, the sensual, the brutal? The danger-point of morals lies with these; and if no divine law exists, the reflex of the character and will of a divine Law-giver, what shall restrain them? It is of these Mr. Justice Stephen bluntly told the Positivists, "Your creed can neither hang them nor damn them; how then can it govern them?"

If morality can survive without any divine authority behind it, why is history so black with the records of perished civilizations? No one will contend that every doubter is instantly and necessarily a rogue, any more than any nominal Christian is necessarily a saint. But it is well to be reminded, sometimes, of the fact that the morality of the world hangs on its religion. On every side the spectacle is witnessed of men who take the ethics of Christianity and try to link them to a non-Christian faith. The experiment is desperate. It is predoomed to inevitable failure. It is true that the issue thus raised is clouded by the fact that unbelief does not at once come to its evil kingdom in morals. The very air the doubter breathes is charged with Christian forces as with some diviner oxygen. The man who rejects the Christian faith is himself the child of centuries of faith. There are multitudes, thank God, who, after they have abandoned historic Christianity, yet cling to its ethics. Such men as Huxley, Mill, and Spencer are cases in point. Religion, in some measure at least, ruled their actions even after it had ceased to convince their intellect. They lived under the law of Christianity, though they no longer accepted its history or believed its theology. But the question, we repeat, is, What, *on*

its own principles, is the logical result of unbelief? When carried to its inevitable conclusion no authoritative basis of morals survives.

Now the point at which many of the Higher Critics fail, and fail tragically, is that in their analysis of the Bible—their eagerness to dissect its literature and dissolve it to its original elements—they totally miss the deep and noble characters in which the law of God as set for human conduct is inscribed on that literature. Human duties are linked to the name of God and are described with a loftiness and beauty unsurpassed in all literature, whether secular or sacred. Much criticism is expended on what are called "the cursing psalms" of the Old Testament—psalms which really resemble nothing so much as those "bad examination papers" which every school yields. They prove that the writers have only imperfectly mastered their subjects. But in the book of Psalms with what a loftiness and grace the divine laws of conduct are sung. Take, for example, part of Psalm 19:

> The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.
> The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.
> The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.
> More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

Nothing in religious literature, as an estimate of God's law of duty, surpasses in beauty and strength these lines. In what noble if sharp-cut

and austere characters, again, human duties are described in Psalm 15:

> Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?
> He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.
> He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor.
> In whose eyes a vile person is contemned: but he honoreth them that fear the Lord. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.
> He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.

In Psalm 119 again the code of human duty is translated into a many-linked chant—a chant high and sweet, unsurpassed on the same subject in literature. Wordsworth's ode on duty is the best poem in English literature on this subject:

> "Stern Law-giver! yet thou dost wear
> The Godhead's most benignant grace."

Its highest note is reached in the lines:

> "Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
> And the most ancient heavens through Thee are clean and strong."

But the unknown Jewish singer of Psalm 119 has a lyrical note which Wordsworth does not excel, and hardly, indeed, reaches:

> Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. . . . My hands will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes. . . . Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. . . . The law of thy

> mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver. . . . I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad. Oh, how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day. . . . Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Now the real friends of the Higher Criticism at least must deplore the fact that they are so busy dissecting the Old Testament Scriptures in search of dates and authors that they somehow fail to recognize and assert this great characteristic of the Old Testament books.

Let us imagine what effect it would have on the world if this contribution the Bible makes to its safety—a code of ethics springing from a divine root and charged with divine authority—were withdrawn. What kind of a world would survive if the ethical forces of that divine code suddenly slipped from its institutions, its literature, its laws, its politics, its domestic life? There are few more tragical spectacles, indeed, than that of a human life from which the Bible, with its divine standard of duty and the relationship with God which makes it possible, is dismissed. The spectacle gains a new sadness when—as is sometimes the case—the human life thus impoverished has ideals high enough to make it dimly conscious of its poverty.

That well-known writer, Myers, tells the story of a memorable interview with George Eliot. "I remember how, at Cambridge," he says, "I walked with her once in the Fellows Garden of Trinity on an evening of rainy May; and she, stirred somewhat beyond her wont, and taking as her text the three words which have been used so often as the inspiring trumpet-calls of men—the words

'God, Immortality, Duty'—pronounced, with terrible earnestness, how inconceivable was the first, how unbelievable the second, and yet how peremptory and absolute the third.

"Never, perhaps, have sterner accents affirmed the sovereignty of impersonal and unrecompensing law. I listened, and night fell; her grave, majestic countenance turned toward me like a sibyl's in the gloom; it was as though she withdrew from my grasp, one by one, the two scrolls of promise and left me the third scroll only, awful with inevitable fates.

"And when we stood at length and parted, amid that columnar circuit of the forest trees, beneath the last twilight of starless skies, I seemed," says Myers, "to be gazing, like Titus at Jerusalem, on vacant seats and empty halls—on a sanctuary with no Presence to hallow it, and heaven left lonely of a God."

What was it in his talk with George Eliot that left in the soul of Myers that sense of utter desolation? It was the picture she drew of a creedless duty—duty, the stern lawgiver of Wordsworth's noble poem, divorced from a personal God, its author, and from Immortality, its reward. The creed of Christianity: the creed which reveals God as our Father, and Christ as our Saviour, and the Divine Spirit—the Lord and giver of light—as our leader, which makes time sacred by linking it to eternity, and gives to this little earth a supreme significance by showing it to be a training ground for heaven—these facts which constitute the Christian Creed alone give motive and direction to duty and make it both intelligible and possible.

CHAPTER IV

THE BIBLE AS A LIVING BOOK

It is a fundamental error in Biblical criticism to treat the divine book merely as a form of literature, with all the limits of literature, to be judged by tests of date and authorship and style, etc. The Bible is literature in form; in fact it is literature with a tremendous *plus;* and the temptation of the Higher Criticism—an error into which it constantly falls—is to forget that *plus*, and so to miss the elements in the Bible which constitute the chief reason for its existence. The question at issue, first and last, is one of spiritual values, and it is precisely these values which so many critics, in their concentration on the literary side of the Bible, forget; and which as a matter of fact the purely literary reading of the Bible wholly misses.

Let a secular illustration be taken. A bank note for £1,000 is in form a literary document and is open to literary tests. A score of pertinent questions lying in the realm of literature may be asked about it. It is printed on special paper; but in what mill is this paper manufactured and from what material? The form of the lettering is peculiar; there are figures on it which plainly have secret significance. What is the reason of this? The note carries a signature; it may be asked, Who is the writer, and is that signature genuine? An Act of Parliament of given date is

cited as authorizing the issue of the note and the question may be raised, Does the note satisfy the terms of the Act? All these questions are legitimate as bearing on the literary character of the note and yet in a sense they are quite irrelevant. They do not touch the real character and value of the note. It is, first and last, a symbol of values—of money value, exchange value, purchasing value. The holder can test its purchasing value only by going into a shop and finding out if he can exchange it for goods; he can test its exchange value by paying it into his account at the bank and finding out that he has actually £1,000 to his credit.

The note, moreover, has its limitations. It is good only for its holder; its value is exhausted in a single transaction; after being used once it becomes a bit of worthless paper. What really gives its value to the bank note is that which is behind it and is represented by the signature it carries—the good faith of the nation and its whole wealth, and literary tests cannot measure that tremendous asset. The dishonor of that bank note would represent the bankruptcy of the nation, both in pocket and credit. We come to values for which, it must be repeated, literature has no symbol. The final validity of the note can be proved by only one test—the act of the person who holds it. He must present the note, and the proof of its value is that he personally and actually receives its value.

The tests of literature, it is clear, can be applied to the bank note but do not touch, still less measure, its real value. And this applies exactly to the pages of the Bible. It, too, is literary in

form, but has values which run far beyond literature, to which literary tests do not apply, and which they cannot measure. And the critic who confines himself to the study of the Bible merely as a form of literature and tries it by literary tests misses completely that which is the true significance of the sacred book—its spiritual values.

Let us take as an illustration an Old Testament hymn—Psalm 23. In its literary structure it is a poem, and a literary critic may ask, Who was its author? or he may study it to discover whether it satisfies the laws of poetry. The language in which it was first sung is now dead; we know it only as a translation; and the question may be asked, When and by whom was the translation made, and is it an adequate rendering of the original? But when all these questions have been asked and answered, the true value of the psalm has not been touched. The question is one of spiritual values, and these lie outside the realm of literature. The psalm is the record of a human experience, a revelation of what God, under certain conditions, has been to and done for a human soul, and in that—on the Christian theory of God and the Bible—lies the promise of what God will do—do for all time—for every other soul under the same conditions. The psalm thus looked at is infinitely more than poetry; it is much more than the experience of one human soul. It has an enduring spiritual value, and is, as we have said, for all time a promise for every other human soul under the same conditions. And the one question worth asking about the psalm is: Does that hidden and divine promise in it hold good? Is

its story repeated and verified in human experience without failure from generation to generation? Does it still hold good to-day? These are questions which, strange to say, no Higher Critic ever asks and which literature cannot answer; they lie outside its realm.

The legitimate and final proof of the spiritual value in the psalm is the test of actual human experience, and as a matter of fact the psalm triumphantly meets that test. It has poured its music not only into the hymns of every Christian church but into the lives of innumerable men and women in every age and under every sky. If it were possible to gather them together, what a multitude which no man could number would stand up and bear witness that the experience set to music in that psalm has been repeated in their lives. God has been to *them* a Shepherd; his goodness and mercy have followed them through life. They have a confidence, through which runs a divine note of certainty, born of faith in God's character and goodness, that they, too, like the singer of that ancient psalm, will "dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." This is the true value of the Bible; and it is a value which literature cannot read—or give.

No material symbol, of course, can express spiritual values, and that is why the bank note for £1,000 which we have used as an illustration is quite inadequate as a measure of the values of such a psalm which outruns all the tests literature knows. The bank note, for example, does not grow in value by use and in proportion to the number of hands through which it passes. As a matter of fact its value for the original holder

is exhausted in a single transaction; it ceases to belong to him; he can only get its value by surrendering it. But God's acts of grace, such as those recorded in Psalm 23 in the Old Testament, or in some word of forgiveness, some miracle of pity by Christ recorded in the New Testament, *increase* in credibility and value with time and use. For they are verified afresh in some human experience every moment, and the number of witnesses grows till it outruns arithmetic.

A new Bible, in a sense, is being written every day, a Bible of verified promises; a Bible of answered prayers, of new sins forgiven, of new mercies coming into a human life and enriching it. Christ's gospel in its very nature is not a theological or historical puzzle over which scholars may hold debates; still less is it a corpse on which a coroner's jury may sit. Its record is one of deliverances wrought in human lives, of sins forgiven, of a salvation achieved through all the ages past. For the mercy which has enriched one human life has a witnessing value which runs beyond that life and becomes a promise of like grace to every other life; and so a new Bible is being written every day. If to-day a troubled soul whispers to Christ, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," Jesus will answer, as he did to that Jewish leper, "I will; be thou clean" (Matthew 8. 3). And oh! the multitude of cleansed lives which bear witness to that fact! The woman in the gospel said, "If I may but touch the hem of his garment I shall be made whole," and that touch of faith *did* bring health. Translated into spiritual terms, this story is every hour being repeated. How many trembling

hands are even now touching the hem of Christ's garment, and finding a healing miracle in the touch! How many, like Peter—but sinking in a blacker sea than he—cry, "Lord, save me, or I perish"! and how surely to each comes the miracle of the outstretched hands of Christ! For the gospel is not a finished history two thousand years behind us; it is being repeated every day in human lives; it will be repeated still through generations unborn till time has run its course. Now what office of value has literary criticism in such a business?

The miracles of Christ, it is clear, have two values, one momentary and one which has a value for all time; one limited to the actual subject of the miracle, the other holding good for all human souls to the end of time. In every miracle there are two elements: (1) the divine pity for the sufferer, and that is eternal; it holds good for all human souls and will do to the end of time; (2) the divine power that canceled in a breath the mischiefs of disease and even the arrest of death; that is individual in its character; it gave strength and health to one human life but the gift in its very nature was brief. The miracles of Christ were individual and for the moment; they did not change the general plan of human existence. But the pity for human griefs revealed in every miracle, *that* must be eternal!

Take the case, for example, of the widow of Nain and her dead son (Luke 7. 14). "Young man," run the words of Christ, "I say unto thee, arise," and at those words the blood, chilled with the ice of death in that lad's veins, ran afresh, life came back; but some day death would put its

cold hand again on that very body. "Weep not," said Christ to the broken-hearted mother, widowed and childless in the streets of Nain; and the music of those words, how far it runs! Its sweetness is for all mothers robbed by death. God did not make human eyes for tears, and his love when it has achieved its whole purpose will wipe the tears from all eyes.

"Stretch forth thine hand," said Christ to the man in the synagogue at Capernaum, and at that word of power strength thrilled along the wasted nerves and muscles and gave back to the strengthless hand its natural office. Yet in how brief an interval death would cancel that gift of strength and turn the hand itself—that hand Christ healed—into dust. But the divine pity for human infirmity—for crippled faculties and senses—revealed in that miracle stands good for all time. Each miracle is a prophecy, for when God's redeeming purpose for our race is accomplished there will be no frozen senses, no crippled limbs. Christ at the grave of Lazarus spoke three words, "Lazarus, come forth"; and from the realm of death, that realm in which human love has no office and the human will no effect, Lazarus came forth. In the process of time the grave again closed over Lazarus and no second call, "Lazarus, come forth," was heard. Christ's miracles, it must be repeated, do not change the general conditions of the race. But what a revelation of pity—of pity for human sorrow—eternal in its nature and infinite in its resources, in the very nature of God, that story reveals! It is prophetic, a forecast of that redeeming pity in the divine nature which will in due time cancel all the

thefts of death. Thrice it is recorded that Jesus wept—once over Jerusalem, once, as told in Hebrews 5 and 7, in his agony, and once by the grave of Lazarus. Through those tears we can look into the very heart of God. He suffers when man, his child, suffers.

"In every sorrow of the heart
Eternal mercy bears a part."

Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood,
He also himself likewise took part of the same;
That, through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death,
. . . and deliver them who through fear of death
Were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Behind every promise of the Bible, behind every act of recorded grace, behind the whole plan of human redemption revealed in it, stands the greatest asset in the universe, the good faith and infinite power of God. He must fall bankrupt before his promise can fail. Time has for it no destroying power; it grows richer and more credible with every passing day by the lives which bear witness to its power; for, to quote the words of T. R. Glover in his *Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire*, "The gospels are not four, but 'ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands,' and the last word of every one of them is 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'"

But somehow all this finds no place in the literature of the Higher Criticism!

CHAPTER V

HOW THE PENTATEUCH HAS SUFFERED

THERE can be no doubt as to the composite structure of the Pentateuch. The race certainly started with some knowledge of God, and this would form a common tradition for all the branches of the race and explains the fact of the traces of the knowledge of such events as the deluge and even of a common ethical code found in some of the divided groups of the race, as in Egypt or Babylonia. These would later have some record on clay tablets or carved stone, and so be handed down. When Abraham became what may be called the spiritual head of the race these records of its early religious training would come into his hands and be preserved with care; Moses would take them as a sacred trust, adding to them the larger knowledge God had given to him, and arrange them in chronological order, employing, no doubt, scribes and copyists—for the records were now to find a place in the first pages of the sacred book of our race, the Bible.

All this is intelligible, and the story of the early dealings of God with the race—passed down first from lip to lip, and then on tablets of clay or stone, at last taking written form and becoming the opening pages of the Bible—is of great interest. The process must have been carried out with

care and fidelity, as a religious act and under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit. And the Higher Critics believe they are able to identify by a single test—that of literary style—every one who had a part in the business! The process began with Astruc in 1753, has been in operation for one hundred and fifty years, and has not even yet reached finality. But perhaps on no other question in the whole literature of the Higher Criticism has such toil been expended and about the results of which the critics are so nearly unanimous. And yet, tried by plain common sense, the methods adopted are an offense to reason, and the results reached would if they appeared in any department of secular literature—applied, say, to Shakespeare or to Macaulay—be regarded as a jest.

In the text of the Pentateuch a vast swarm of compilers, editors, redactors, copyists, and critics have been invented, and labeled with letters of the alphabet. Thus J stands for the writer who used the word Jehovah, or Jahweh, for God; E used the word Elohim; P was the writer of the Priestly Code; D was the Deuteronomic writer, etc. The letter chosen in each case became in time the symbol, not of an individual but of a group or even of a school of writers, and each of the group, too, must in turn be provided with an editor, a redactor, a combiner, etc. So we get a J2 and E2; P is resolved into P1, P2, P3; there is a "Deuteronomic editor"—D2 as well as the original D—besides H. It is assumed there must have been some one to combine J with J2, and some one else to combine the combined narrative with E, and yet another to combine the whole with D.

There was a redactor, RH, to fit the "Law of Holiness" into its "parenetic framework," and then H had to be incorporated with P, and that again with P2 and P3. Lastly, there was the final redactor to interweave the whole in the intricate manner required by the present critical theory. It has become nearly as complicated as the Ptolemaic system! Mr. A. H. Finn, whose book, *The Unity of the Pentateuch*, is a model of patient and honest criticism, warns us: "There is not an atom of evidence that J, E, D, P ever existed as separate sources, or that the various authors and editors ever existed, or that the three or more compilations were ever made, or that the book of Joshua was ever connected with the five preceding books."[1]

Now it may be safely said that outside this army of literary ghosts, represented by letters of the alphabet, no writers with brains of so limited a character that they could only write in one style ever existed. The theory is in conflict with literary history; it is an insult to the human intelligence; it would break down if applied to modern literature. And we are told bluntly by Mr. Finn: "There are improbabilities involved at every stage of the critical theory; improbabilities as to the work of J and E; as to the work of D; as to the work of P, P2, and P3; as to the work of the redactors; and as to the publication and reception of the combined whole. These improbabilities against the several steps must be [not added but] multiplied together, and the total improbability against the theory consequently becomes enormous."[2]

[1]Finn, p. 412. [2]Finn, *ibid.*

But it is unnecessary to quote authorities; the present reader, if he has no pretensions to scholarship, but only sufficient common sense to know a foolish thing when he sees it, can judge by only looking at the results and seeing in what form the Pentateuch emerges as to the value of the theory employed by the critics.

Here, for example, is verse 1 in Deuteronomy 34 as it stands in the text:

"And Moses went up from the plains of Moab into Mount Nebo to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land."

Now it is clear at a glance that the verse has no particular "style" about it, still less is it a jumble of such entirely conflicting styles that it must have taken at least four writers to produce it, so it must be broken up into three or four fragments and each one assigned to an entirely unknown author, labeled with a letter of the alphabet. And here is the shape in which it appears when the critics have done with it:

"(JE) And Moses went up (P) from the plains of Moab into Mount Nebo (JE) to the top of Pisgah, (P) that is over against Jericho. (JE) And the Lord showed him all the land."

It will be seen that JE, in combination, write the words "And Moses went up"; then P thrusts in and speaks—"from the plains of Moab unto Mount Nebo." JE then takes up the narrative—"to the top of Pisgah," and at this point the intrusive P appears afresh with his little bit—"that is over against Jericho"; and JE completes the duet with the words, "And the Lord showed him all the land," etc. Now are those literary ghosts,

flitting behind the text, and thrusting irrelevantly into it, really necessary to make it intelligible?

The theory on which the text of the earlier books of the Bible is dissected, and rearranged, and supplied with a long procession of writers—editors, redactors, etc.—is simple. It proceeds on the assumption that every diversity and change of style or opinion has a recognized and different writer who can be always identified. Thus one writer is methodical and heavy-footed; another is graphic and "popular"; a third is strong in arithmetic; and for each varying shade in style a new editor, or redactor, has to be invented. The many-voiced oratorio of the Pentateuch is thus provided with a many-voiced chorus of writers. If in the passages ascribed, say, to P or E new phrases are discovered, a totally new writer, editor, redactor, or copyist is invented, labeled with another letter of the alphabet to meet the emergency. As a result the list of editors and redactors, etc.—all of them literary ghosts—is so long and complex that the mere catalogue of symbols—alphabetical or algebraical—to represent them stretches through pages. If the principle on which the documents of the Pentateuch have been thus supplied with an army of imaginary writers holds good, why should it not be applied to the whole Bible? And if that were done, what a totally new and astonishing Bible would be the result!

Now what faintest authority is there for cutting up the plainest sentences in the Bible in this fashion? It is not scholarship, it is not sane criticism, it is not common sense. The whole process escapes being dismissed by the universal

laughter of mankind owing to the circumstance that it is applied to documents of vast antiquity, written in languages now dead, and which few besides the critics themselves could read. But let us suppose the method was applied to books in our own language! A secular critic who applied this rule, say, to De Quincey, and discovered that it took half a dozen De Quinceys to write *The Confessions of An Opium Eater*, would be dismissed with contempt. It is a process which if applied to *any* secular book would seem a bad jest. Imagine Macaulay's *History of England* treated on this method. Macaulay, in turn, is statistical, picturesque, analytical, satirical; and Macaulay was capable, unassisted, of writing in all these keys. Could any one persuade us that, as a mere fact, there were *four* Macaulays and that it *needed* a separate writer to attain this variety in literary style? Must we believe that the Cowper who wrote "John Gilpin" was a totally distinct person from the poet who wrote "Lines to My Mother's Picture"? If the Higher Critics apply their methods to Dickens' works they must refuse to believe that the characters of Mr. Pickwick and of the Fat Boy, of Sarah Gamp and of Little Nell could have come from the same brain. How many Shakespeares would be required to account for the immortal plays?

It is clear that a theory which has been at work for a century and a half, and has undergone a score of changes in the process, and yet lies open to attack, must have in it some fatal element of unsoundness; and there are many signs to-day that it is losing popularity. It is a significant fact that in his book, *The Bible: Its Origin and*

Significance, Dr. Peake himself admits the existence of "a certain revolt" against Astruc's supposed discovery. Eerdmans, for example, was the most brilliant of Kuenen's pupils and succeeded that great critic in his chair at Leyden. He long held Astruc's theory but finally gave it up as unsound and even absurd. His defection, Peake admits, was "a very ominous fact" (p. 170). "For why," Peake naturally reflects, "should a man go back on his training and his earlier faith and confess that he had been completely mistaken, unless the reasons were given?" And Eerdmans' revolt went against the whole "documentary analysis" theory.

Peake dismisses Eerdmans' revolt as "sensational rather than momentous"; but Professor Welsh, D.D., in his inaugural lecture at the opening session in 1922 of the New College in Edinburgh—and the New College, it is to be remembered, is of the first rank in the United Kingdom as a theological institution—takes the three positions on which modern criticism is most assured of its "results." The first is the analysis of Genesis, founded on the different uses of the divine names; the second is the theory that Deuteronomy was first brought to light in 621 B. C., in the reign of Josiah; the third is that Ezra, about 440 B. C., completed the Priestly Code; and Professor Welsh—who, it must be remembered, speaks not only to a theological school, but *for* a theological school—pronounces the whole three to be either uncertain or disproved.

"Where the critical theory," he said, "had erred was in its failure to apply its own principles. It had framed an inelastic, rigid theory

which it had imposed upon the free movement of history, and in particular it had failed to recognize that in religious matters humanity did not advance like a drilled army along the high road. Its adherents had believed in the possibility of changing the outlook of a generation and the religious hopes of a period by a sudden order from King Josiah or Ezra or somebody else."

In the *Expository Times*, again—of which Dr. Hastings, the ablest and at the same time the sanest brain in the whole army of critics, is the editor—an article by Professor Naville appears, in which he dismisses the whole J. E. D. theory with a touch of something like contempt. "Astruc's idea," he says, "is not a proved fact; it is only his personal opinion, his way of explaining the irregular employment of the two names of God. There is absolutely no proof of the existence of these two authors; they are creations of Astruc, based merely on his way of interpreting the text.

"The logical order has been entirely reversed; it is not the theory which is based on the text. It is the text which has to be dismembered, reconstructed, and trimmed so that it may harmonize with the theory."

The truth is that on this subject there are two literatures: (1) that of which Peake's Commentary is an example, which with docile readiness accepts both the methods and results of the extreme critics, but tries to deodorize them sufficiently to make them acceptable to the general Christian palate; (2) literature of a saner type, of which *The Problem of the Old Testament*, by Professor Orr, and *The Unity of the Pentateuch*,

by the Rev. A. H. Finn—with a preface by the late Bishop of Durham—are examples. Professor Orr's book is a scholarly and sober discussion of all the subjects involved, leading up to conservative results. *The Unity of the Pentateuch*, by the Rev. A. H. Finn, also stands on the conservative side, and is an admirable combination of keen logic with a certain flavor of humor; and humor in this business is sometimes even more effective than logic. Finn's treatment of the "assured results" of the Higher Criticism is a very admirable bit of work. On page 379 he applies the methods of the Higher Criticism to the writings of the most famous of the Higher Critics, Dr. S. R. Driver himself; he takes a chapter of Dr. Driver's *Book of Genesis*, and on Driver's own methods proves that his book has a very "multiple" authorship indeed; at least a dozen Dr. Drivers—each with his special characteristic, his "editor and his redactor"—must have taken part in its composition.

Many of the Higher Critics, of course, believe that the theory which has been applied to the documents of the Pentateuch has a sort of mathematical certainty; and if it is so it ought to be as capable of demonstration at any moment and in any field as a mathematical proposition is. This being so, the holders of the theory have within their reach an argument which would be final. A principle which holds good and yields such surprising results when applied to documents in a dead language and at least three thousand years old ought to yield yet some brilliant and certain results if applied to a newspaper only a week old, and in a living and familiar language. Let a com-

mittee, using—as in the case of the Pentateuch—the single test of style, discover how many writers are employed in producing a single copy of *The Times* and label them with letters of the alphabet, assigning to each his particular contribution; let them discover where the leader of the reporting staff struck out anything from or added anything to the report each member of his staff sent in; further, let the committee discover and label the contributions to the leading columns and detect every alteration made by the editor.

The critics, it may be suspected, would refuse this test; they know that their methods would fail if applied to yesterday's newspaper and everybody else knows it too. But if all this cannot be done, and done with success, in the newspaper of last week, how can the critics who fail in this application of their art pretend to succeed in the much more difficult task of successfully analyzing all the writers—down to the last copyist—in the Pentateuch?

CHAPTER VI

THE WANT OF A SENSE OF HUMOR IN THE HIGHER CRITICS

No one can study the literature of the Higher Criticism, whether of Germany or Great Britain, without finding in it many proofs of a melancholy want of the sense of humor in many, at least, of the critics themselves. It may be asked, What possible office can the sense of humor have in the realm of theology, a subject which challenges not only the deepest feelings the soul can know but the highest powers of the intellect? Has not the sense of humor a purely secular office, an office, indeed, usually not of a very dignified sort, and too often perhaps represented and expressed by "the loud laugh that speaks the vacant mind"?

This, of course, is not quite the case. The sense of humor has for the intellect the office of a healthy salt. It means, in the last analysis, a sense—swift as an instinct and as sure—of the relative sizes of things, a quick vision for the irrelevant, for the absurd. To be equipped with it means to have a certain balance of the mind which saves the possessor from an obstinate, unreasoning bias of opinion on any subject, an obsession which makes the sufferer blind to every side of a subject except one, a tragical form of color-blindness, especially in matters of religion. And in the controversial side of religion at least the sense of humor has a real and most useful

office. There would have been fewer heresies in history—or the heresies would have died sooner than they did—if theologians had a little more of a gift so healthy. The sense of humor has its own sudden and instinctive logic against which there is no appeal, and it is the servant and safeguard of that divine faculty of reason which, as Butler says in his *Analogy*, is "the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning everything, even religion itself." For no more deadly injury can be done to religion than to make it ridiculous. To be in open quarrel with the general sense of humor in the human mind is for anything—policy or theory or doctrine—a fatal attitude.

Gibbon was an artist in words even when expressing his hatred of religion, and his history is studded with sly and clever stabs at it. In his account of the great Arian Controversy of the fourth century and of the wars which it kindled is a dainty but deadly stroke intended to array against Christianity the world's sense of humor. That controversy, he said, offered mankind the spectacle of Christians "killing each other in millions over a diphthong," for the difference between the two disputed words, Homo-ousion and Homoi-ousion, is measured by a diphthong. But for how much that diphthong stood! As Carlyle puts it, with rough Scottish sense, "If the Arian had triumphed there would be no Christianity to-day." But Gibbon knew for how much in a controversy the sense of humor counted, and it is worth remembering that in that famous stab at the Christian faith the historian was trying to array against it that very force.

Now too many of the Higher Critics under every sky show themselves, in patches at least, deplorably bankrupt in this very sense of humor. In the German mind, of course, the sense of humor is tragically faint and the attempts of German theologians to banish the element of the miraculous from Christian history supply many proofs of the injury theology suffers from the lack of a sense of humor in its theologians. The excursions of German scholars into the realms of the non-humorous in order to discredit the stories of miracles in the gospels are of almost incredible simplicity.

Thus the *Lives of Christ* published by Bahrdt and Venturini represent an attempt to supply at any cost a non-supernatural interpretation of the miracle stories of the gospel. The result is pages of literature almost as entertaining—though without their authors in the least intending it—as so many pages in Punch. Venturini, for example, undertakes to show how Christ's healing miracles were done.

He never healed, we are assured, without medicaments, and *always carried his "portable medical chest" with him.* In the case of the Syrophœnician woman's daughter, for example, "we can still detect in the narrative a hint of the actual course of events. The mother explains the case to Jesus. After inquiring where her dwelling was he made a sign to John, and continued to hold her in conversation. The disciple went to the daughter and gave her a sedative and when the mother returned she found her child cured."[1] Venturini again "explains" the miracle at Cana

[1]Schweitzer, p. 44.

with as much intimacy and confidence as though he had been there.

"Jesus had brought with him as a wedding gift some jars of good wine and had put them aside in another room. When the wine was finished and his mother became anxious, he still allowed the guests to wait a little, as the stone vessels for purification had not yet been filled with water. When that had been done he ordered the servants to pour out some of his wine, but to tell no one whence it came." When John, as an old man, wrote his gospel, "he got all this rather mixed up—had not indeed observed it very closely at the time, had perhaps been the least bit merry himself," says Venturini, "and had believed in the miracle with the rest."

Bahrdt shows us that the walking on the sea is to be explained by supposing that Jesus walked towards the disciples over the surface of a great floating raft while they, not being able to see the raft, must needs suppose a miracle. When Peter tried to walk on the water he failed miserably. The miracles of healing, Bahrdt holds, are to be attributed to the art of Luke. "He also called the attention of Jesus to remarkable cases of apparent death, which he then took in hand and restored the apparently dead to their sorrowing friends." The resurrection of Jesus Christ is explained in the same unconsciously humorous way. Jesus had fallen into the hands of the Essenes and a fictitious trial and death of Jesus had been arranged. As Luke had "prepared the body of the Messiah by means of strengthening medicines to resist the fearful ill-usage which he had gone through—the being dragged about and

being beaten and finally crucified—these efforts were crowned with success. In the cave the most strengthening nutriment was supplied to him. Since the humors of the body were in a thoroughly healthy condition his wounds healed very readily, and by the third day he was able to walk, in spite of the fact that the wounds made by the nails were still open."

Bahrdt again supplies a non-miraculous explanation of the feeding of the four thousand. Jesus had a cave amply supplied with food, and two of the disciples secretly passed parcels of food to Jesus as he stood at the entrance to the cave. It is worth while remembering that Sanday, one of the keenest brains of the British Higher Criticism, has an explanation of the Feeding of the Four Thousand which for foolishness might almost be put beside that of Bahrdt.

Some Higher Critics of the British variety again plainly suffer from a lack of a sense of humor almost as tragic as that discoverable in German theologians. When Principal Griffith-Jones, in Peake's Commentary, for example, undertaking to measure and describe the limitations of Jesus Christ, assures us that the Saviour of the world "knew little or nothing of Greek philosophy," the most elementary sense of humor is offended. For it is natural to speculate how Principal Griffith-Jones had discovered that patch of ignorance in the mind of Christ. Did he put Jesus Christ through an examination in Greek philosophy and find that his paper deserved very low marks? And if so, why does he think it necessary to inform the world of the Saviour's ignorance on this particular subject?

Any one who has the remotest acquaintance with Greek literature, especially if he has ever read it in the original, knows that the highest reach of Greek philosophy—the point where it discusses divine things—is in the Phædo of Plato, where Socrates, just before he drinks the hemlock, discusses with those about him life and death and the world beyond death. Now in that story there are sentences which might have been taken from the New Testament. Who will doubt that Socrates, without any intellectual knowledge of the historic Christ—he lived some four centuries *before* Christ—had yet caught a gleam of his spirit; had drunk something of the divine wine which he who wrought the miracle at Cana still lifts to human lips? For Jesus Christ, in his divine office, was "slain from the foundation of the world." Multitudes who never knew his name are saved by him, for he lifted the whole race from the dawn of time to what may be called salvable conditions. Yes, the spirit of Christ was in that little room in Athens in which Socrates waited his death and talked so divinely to his followers; and Principal Griffith-Jones, as a scholar, would certainly agree with this. Yet he thinks that while Christ, in his office of Saviour, knew enough of Greek philosophers as human beings to be their Saviour, yet knew nothing of their philosophy, which—to quote Euclid—"is absurd."

Can we read these explanations without feeling that they need no other refutation than a smile? They are incredible from pure foolishness. It is worth noticing that with German readers Venturini's "explanations are extraordinarily popular." Schweitzer, in his *Quest of the His-*

torical Jesus, says: "Venturini's *Non-supernatural History of the Great Prophet of Nazareth* may almost be said to be reissued annually down to the present day, for all the fictitious *Lives* go back directly or indirectly to the type which he created." He adds significantly: "Thus it was the fictitious *Lives* of Bahrdt and Venturini which at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries first attempted to apply with logical consistency a non-supernatural interpretation to the miracle stories of the gospel."

And when we hear Christ speaking the great words which have reshaped the history of the world, words which for all of us measure the difference between eternal life and eternal death, what can be more ridiculous, from mere disproportion, than to hear Canon Barnes' piping voice assuring us that "clearly the natural ability of the Saviour was great"!

The critics again are anxious to convict Christ of entire ignorance as to the writers of the Old Testament books, as they have a theory of that authorship totally opposed to his. It is natural to suppose that Christ knew who the writers were; and as the writings in dispute were the very books which foretold his coming, and were written to prepare the way for that coming, the contention, in which practically all the Higher Critics join, lends itself to humorous treatment at many points. Whatever may have been the human limitations of Christ during his earthly ministry, those limitations must again have ceased when the purpose of the Incarnation was achieved, when he had accomplished the redemption of our

race, had achieved his triumph over death, and was able to claim that "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Now on this historic walk to Emmaus, when Christ, as yet unrecognized, joined Cleopas and his companion, he asked why they wore faces so sad and listened to the tale of their doubts. "We trusted," they sighed, "it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." Christ met them with the rebuke: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken . . . and beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." Now if a Higher Critic of to-day—it would be cruel to suggest names—had made a fourth in that walk and had heard Jesus describing the other two as "fools" for their "slowness of heart in believing all that Moses and the prophets had spoken" about him, he certainly would have felt himself called to correct the Saviour's mistake. "Master," he would have said, "you are quite wrong. Moses wrote nothing whatever on the subject you speak of and as for the prophets nobody can be sure about *them.* It is precisely because these two are *not* 'fools' that they are slow of heart to believe what Moses and all the prophets, as you mistakenly suppose, have said about you!"

Later the same evening, to the Twelve, Christ repeated what some at least of the Higher Critics of to-day would think his deplorable mistake. He said to them: "These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms,

concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." In those words Christ claims afresh that the things which had been fulfilled about him were "written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms." What a white flame of ridicule would scorch the figure of the critic who in that room and at that moment undertook to tell Christ, the Eternal Son of God, who had accomplished the salvation of our race, that he was entirely ignorant of the subject on which he spoke! The sense of humor would suggest that Christ's words, "O fools, and slow of heart *not* to believe . . . all that Moses and the prophets have said concerning me," might have found another and a quite modern application. They run across two thousand years, and are not without some personal application for a number of learned and very positive theologians of our day. Would not a few grains of what we have called the wholesomeness of common sense—if not of the sense of humor—make even the most positive and obstinate of Higher Critics hesitate, and begin to doubt his Higher Criticism before he ventures to accuse the Risen Christ of ignorance of the very Scriptures which foretold him?

CHAPTER VII

WHAT IS THE SCOPE OF THE BIBLE?

The Bible is not merely a *record* of God's method of saving the race; it is itself a channel—one of many channels—through which the saving grace of the gospel runs; a force which transcends all mere literature—deep, enduring, divine, and flowing from God himself. The strange divine forces in it are as real in the spiritual order as gravitation and electricity are in the physical order. They can be counted on as surely; their action is as much beyond any possibility of doubt. No one knows the secret of the Bible who does not surrender himself to the action of these forces. And the saving forces of the gospel of Jesus Christ are not confined to any nation or color; they are meant for the race; they are as wide as the race. They are wider in their action to-day than the visible agencies of the Christian churches; and failure to recognize the proofs of this in the Bible itself is to miss the deeper meaning of the sacred book.

Its immediate purpose, of course, is to show God's method of preparing for the coming of his Eternal Son into our human nature, and accomplishing the redeeming sacrifice of his death. To do this, a single race, the Jews, had to be chosen. Their training stretches through centuries; and it is from this specially chosen stock, after a training which has passed from stage to stage through more than two thousand years, that

Christ came. But when the great Redeeming Sacrifice of the Cross was accomplished, what may be called the "race limitations" of the gospel ceased. The gospel had to its Jewish stock the relation that a flower has to the stem on which it is carried, but it comes to the world to-day not as a Jewish creed but as the creed of the human race.

The world-wide sweep of the gospel finds dramatic proof in the first Christian sermon ever preached, when "every man heard in his own tongue wherein he was born, Parthians and Medes and Elamites . . ." the catalogue runs on, till the wondering crowd—"strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians"—cry to each other, "We do hear them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God." And Paul again and again in his Epistles strikes the universal note. "In Christ," he says, "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, but Christ is all in all."

But in the Old Testament, too, there is—alas! too long and often unrecognized—the universal note. The grace of God flows through the Jewish stock but is not confined to it.

Modern criticism is apt to dismiss from consideration the books which bear the names of Ruth and Esther and Jonah. They seem irrelevant; they bear no immediate relation to the Jewish story with its sublime and single purpose of producing the stock from which the Incarnate Son of God should spring. The book of Ruth, looked at from the literary standpoint, is an Eastern idyll, and poetry has gathered round the

figure of its heroine—a Moabitish girl—as she stands "knee deep amid the alien corn." In her nature, it is true, love, human love, took a high and noble form. "Entreat me not to leave thee," she says to her mother-in-law, "or to return from following after thee. Whither thou goest I will go . . . where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried." But the all-significant note of this Moabitish girl's devotion is generally omitted, "*Thy God shall be my God!*" She left her heathen faith, her heathen kinsfolk, under the action of spiritual forces and for spiritual ends; and the book has its place in the Old Testament clearly designed to show that it was not from a purely Jewish stock that the Saviour of the race sprang; there was in it a strain of non-Jewish blood. The universal note is there!

So again the book of Esther seems to have no direct relation to the spiritual purposes for which the Jewish race was being trained. The name of God is not even mentioned in it. But the book is an Eastern drama in which we see evil and good struggling together. What a study we have in Haman of a nature given to evil! On the side of evil are all the forces of the empire; and in the courage of the Jewish girl when she takes her life in her hands—"If I die, I die" on her lips to save her race—we see how in the providence of God evil is defeated and the nation is saved. And to this very day in every Jewish household the name and the deed of Esther are remembered and honored. It is a tiny picture showing how—*outside* the Jewish race—God works for the triumph of good and the defeat of evil.

The book of Jonah, again, if we read it through

the spectacles of the Higher Critics, is made incredible and turned into a mere folk-story of a low type by the incident of Jonah and the whale. What relation has the book to the purpose for which the Jewish race was being trained? But as a mere study in the play of human and divine forces the story of Jonah is of immeasurable value; it goes to the very root of things. As an illustration of the action of divine forces outside the Jewish area what can be more striking? Here is one of the great cities of that age "wherein were more than six score thousand that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand"; and also there is "much cattle." God sends his servant to this city with a call to repentance, the city repents and God averts its doom.

And what a contrast the story offers between human and divine pity! We see Jonah sitting to watch the doom of Nineveh accomplished, and ready to die of mere vexation because God's pity was so great—while it is God who remembers the "six score thousand" little children and "cattle." What a revelation of his character is given in the very process of a great judgment, as in God's care for the little ones and for the cattle.

These three books, which some critics would thrust out of the Bible on the ground of their irrelevance, are set there by God himself as an example of his way of dealing with non-Jewish races, even while that race was being trained with such care for its high office in the birth of Jesus Christ. And the revelation holds good still; this is still the office of the Bible—to bear witness to the blessed fact that the love of God for our race is co-extensive with the race.

BOOK III

ON MIRACLES

"If it can be shown that the proof alleged of all these [Christ's miracles] is absolutely none at all, then is revelation overturned."—BUTLER'S *Analogy*.

CHAPTER I

"THE PREJUDICE OF CRITICISM"

In his new book, *Belief in God*, Bishop Gore—who, it must be remembered, is himself a scholar of distinction and a Higher Critic in the sane sense of the term—has a chapter on what he calls "The Prejudice of Criticism."

"For the last seventy years," he says, "the intellect of Europe as a whole—so far as it has paid attention to the origins of Christianity—has been occupied in substantially rewriting the gospels. It has been producing an historical Jesus markedly unlike the original in the gospels, or rather several discordant pictures all unlike the original in many most important respects. Now when we set ourselves to examine the cause of this undoubted fact I think we shall find it to be that the *intellect of Europe has been in rebellion against the miraculous, and generally, the supernatural, of which the gospels are confessedly full.*" That "prejudice against the supernatural and the miraculous"—a vast presupposition, a theory accepted as a fact without being proved that such events cannot really have occurred—has made necessary, Bishop Gore tells us, "that radical reconstruction of the historical Jesus which we witness"; and that is certainly and visibly true.

The widespread objection to the miraculous

element in Christianity springs from the theory of evolution, which Darwin first—in an imperfect way—recognized and which at once appealed to the reason, satisfied the science, and captured the imagination, of the world. Everything, it was argued, must now be interpreted in its terms and made to fit in with its laws. It seemed to show that the universe itself was governed by general laws which left no room for such an interruption as a "miracle," and the impact of evolution on religion for the moment was profound. In the later and wiser reading of evolution it is clear, of course, that it has no necessary quarrel with religion. It is not inevitably and necessarily atheistic. It undertakes not to prove that the world has no Maker but only to discover the method on which it is made; and certainly evolution as it is now understood gives ample room for the miraculous, and this for two reasons.

First, evolution, so far from making miracles incredible, is itself on any reading the greatest of miracles. The original germ, which contained all things, and from which all things have evolved, cannot have evolved *itself*. God must come into the process somewhere, even if only at the beginning and with a single creative act. And the part that God plays in the making of things by this theory is not *minimized;* it is infinitely magnified! For what a miracle above all miracles must have been the act—and the moment—when into a solitary germ God packed the whole physical universe, with all its forces, its myriad forms of life; packed into it all history, all art, all religion, all literature, all crimes, and all virtues; the brain of Plato and of Shakespeare, the heroism of the

saints, the fury of their persecutors! It is surely a greater strain, both on the imagination and the reason, to believe in that lonely, all-including, and original germ—into which a universe was packed—than is required by the narrowest and most literal reading of the first chapters of Genesis.

But further, it is clear that the physical universe, even though it is governed by the laws of evolution, visibly leaves room in its order for the play of human will. And is God less than man? Has he given to his creature a larger freedom within the circle of physical laws than he himself has?

It is, of course, an idle business to discuss the question of miracles with an opponent who denies the existence of a personal God. An atheist pure and simple belongs to an intellectual realm remote from reason, and requires quite special controversial treatment. But granted the existence of a personal God, having the moral qualities—but in perfect and infinite measure—that we possess, then an immense moral presumption in favor of the occurrence of miracles is instantly created. Our own relation to Nature as intelligent agents carries with it the power to put natural forces into new conjunctions, and so to produce results which to Nature itself are impossible; and this makes results outside the range of natural laws themselves credible. And why should not God be able to do in the vast sphere of the universe what we can do in the tiny sphere of our lives?

Now it is the deepest—though sometimes the speechless and unconscious—longing of human nature to know God on the moral side of his character; and even if God be no better than good

men, he must desire to make exactly that moral revelation of himself to his creatures. Would he kindle that divine longing in us only to mock it?

The visible law of even the physical universe is that no organ is left without an element which corresponds to it. Is it credible that God would have given us eyes and then set us in a world without light? Is it credible that he would have given us lungs and then set us in a world without an atmosphere? A world constructed on such principles would be the creation of a mocking devil! God's world certainly is not built on *that* plan! Now the faculty in our nature that has the deepest root and the widest range is the faculty, in some degree at least, of knowing God; and with the capacity for that great experience comes the need for it; it determines that our happiness lies in it. If the satisfaction of that faculty is an impossibility, our existence is a failure. But will God, who planted that deep instinct in our nature, mock it by withholding from us the knowledge of which he has made us capable, and on which, by his own law, our happiness hangs? To give us the capacity for knowing God, to put in our deepest nature an unquenchable longing for that knowledge and then to make no provision for such a knowledge to reach us were a worse crime than to give us eyes and then to bid us live in a world without light. What a slander *that* would be on God!

But how shall God give us that knowledge? How can he reach men? But God so made men that their lives can be touched to finest issues by his realized presence. Only by entering into rela-

tions with them on another plane than that of which we call "natural law"—by exhibiting himself in regard to them, in a course of conduct above the purely physical realm—only so his creatures will learn to know God as a moral Being. Only so they will receive the stimulus they need; so, and only so, will the Creator fulfill toward man that purpose for which alone we can conceive that he created him. But if that be the case, then it is only by miracle that he can do so. And the justification of miracles is the fact that they are part of a scheme by which God brings himself within reach of our limited faculties and makes the knowledge of himself possible to us. This constitutes that overwhelming presumption in favor of the occurrence of miracles which the critics of the Christian faith, from Hume to Huxley, ignore.

Matthew Arnold discusses the incident of a pen suddenly becoming a penwiper and Professor Huxley takes the illustration of a centaur discovered walking down Fleet Street as fair examples of possible miracles. Professor Huxley declares that "nothing short of a careful monograph by a highly competent investigator, accompanied by figures and measurements," could convince him about the centaur! But this miraculous penwiper or centaur has no moral prejustification or use; whereas the Christian miracles are not so much the guarantee and evidence of a revelation; they are a revelation itself—the revelation which it is the highest moral necessity on the part of God to make, and the deepest spiritual need on the part of the man to receive.

It may be remembered that in that now almost

forgotten book, *Robert Elesmere,* it was claimed to be proved beyond doubt that miracles do not happen. To this Andrew Lang replied: "Miracles do not happen? Then it is a miracle if they do not"—an epigram keen-edged and true, for, as Scott Holland, quoting Lang's epigram, said, their not happening would mean this—that there exists a loving God who has made creatures whose highest power is love and compassion for beings like themselves, and though they toil along in agony and darkness, endeavoring to realize that which is highest in them potentially, he never reaches forth a helping hand, never speaks that word which it so overawed Browning's Arabian physician even to think possible:

> "Oh, heart I made, a heart beats here,
> Face my hands fashioned, see it in myself;
> Thou hast no power, nor may'st conceive of mine.
> But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
> And thou must love me, who have died for thee."

That God does not make such a revelation of himself to his creatures seems a very incredible proposition, and the claim of the Bible is that this incredible thing is not true.

It may be added that it is possible to argue, with resistless force, that miracles are not only authenticated by a great forerunning moral presumption, they are justified by their visible results in history. From the miracles of Scripture there does, as a matter of fact, stream a luminous moral glory in which the face of God is revealed as Nature, though all her majestic processes cannot reveal him.

Butler, the author of the famous *Analogy,* the

sanest and keenest brain ever employed in English literature on the greatest subjects of religion, saw with clear and sure vision that the Christian faith itself, which rests on miracles and is attested by miracles, stands or falls by the credibility of the miracles it records.

The trouble of the moment for us—and since truth abides the trouble is only for the moment—is that so many of the professed teachers of the Christian faith regard miracles as the excrescences and the burdens of the Christian system; and they try the experiment of making faith in Christianity easier by the process of attenuating or jettisoning its miracles! They might as well propose to improve the seagoing capabilities of a ship by jettisoning its compass and chart and sails! And it is worth while here reprinting Butler's weighty and solemn warning that the Christian faith, which rests on miracles and is attested by miracles, stands or falls by the credibility of the miracle records.

"The only question," he says, "concerning the truth of Christianity is whether it be a real revelation, not whether it be attended with every circumstance which we should have looked for; and concerning the authority of Scripture, whether it be what it claims to be, not whether it be a book of such sort, and so promulgated, as weak men are apt to fancy a book containing a divine revelation should. No objections can overthrow such a kind of revelation as the Christian claims to be, since there are no objections against the morality of it, but such as can show that there is no proof of miracles wrought originally in attestation of it; no appearance of anything miracu-

lous in its obtaining in the world; nor any of prophecy—that is, of events foretold which human sagacity could not foresee. *If it can be shown that the proof alleged for all these is absolutely none at all, then is revelation overturned.*"

CHAPTER II

THREE POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES

THERE are only three possible alternatives to a belief in the miraculous as an element in the Christian faith: (1) The absolute rejection of the possibility of miracles; this is practically the German position. "The exclusion of miracles from our view of history," says Schweitzer, "has been universally recognized as a principle of criticism" (Gore, p. 219). "In the Person and acts of Jesus," says Strauss, "no supernaturalism should be allowed to venture." Renan, in *Vie de Jésus*, follows the Germans; "people who are in accord with positive science," he says, "do not admit the supernatural, the miracle." The universe is a system of Law, and God—if he exists—is imprisoned in his own laws. Man, his creature, it is true, is a free agent and the laws of Nature for him are visibly tools which he can use to produce results which would be impossible to the laws of Nature if left to themselves. Could "the laws of Nature," if left to themselves, produce a watch or run a train? The theory that miracles are impossible assumes that God has less power over his own laws than man, his creature, has. He cannot, or will not, use those laws as the servant of his personal will as his creature man does and use them to produce results of which those laws themselves are incapable.

The second alternative to a belief in the miraculous is to accept the possibility of miracles as a theory but to deny their actual existence as a fact. Thus Kuenen, in his own words, "while placing in the forefront of historical criticism the theory that miracles are possible," yet declares "his conviction that there is not one single miracle on record which we could accept as a fact." This is an ingenious—or rather a disingenious—evasion of the whole question.

The third method, and one that is more plausible, is that of Schleiermacher. He expended infinite labor and skill in exhausting the miracles of the New Testament of all "miraculous" character and he showed equal ingenuity in imparting a natural aspect to what survived. His literary skill made his method popular but the practical effect on his own students was, as one critic puts it, to send them in one or other of two quite opposite directions—upwards toward a stronger and more honest faith than that of their teacher or "downwards into the depths of theological negation." Schleiermacher, in a word, had no disciples who remained loyal to his teaching; the foothold he gave them was too narrow.

Now it may be well at this stage, if only by way of clearing the ground, to deal with the first of these three possible alternatives to a belief in the miraculous, the peremptory and absolute dismissal of miracles from the whole realm of religion, and the construction of a non-miraculous form of the Christian faith. In Germany for nearly a century the strongest—if not the keenest and quickest—brains ever applied to theology were used with the plodding and heavy-footed

industry characteristic of German work to evolve and make credible an absolutely non-miraculous form of Christian faith. They failed—failed absolutely—and the story of their failure is told with great clearness and insight and with deep and unconscious pathos by one who is himself a distinguished German scholar, Albert Schweitzer, in his well-known book, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus.*

The list of learned names stretches from Reimarus, who died in 1768, to such names as Wrede (1901) and Pfleiderer (1902), a procession of great scholars, laboriously evolving ingenious theories to take the place of the historic Gospel, theories which came like shadows and went like shadows. And the spectacle is a tragedy almost without parallel in literary history—a tragedy of learned brains beating the wind with infinite toil, or sowing with profitless industry the sand, or doing whatever serves as the most perfect symbol of wasted effort. Schweitzer himself says that "the greatest achievement of German theology is the critical investigation of the life of Jesus. It is the most tremendous thing which the [German] religious consciousness has ever dared and done and it is a failure, a failure cruel alike in its thoroughness and its cost."

"The critical study of the life of Jesus," he adds, "has been for theology a school of honesty. The world has never seen before, and will never see again, a struggle for truth so full of pain and renunciation as that of which the Lives of Jesus of the last hundred years contain the cryptic record" (p. 5). Schweitzer himself says that as he contemplates the task of describing

the toil of German theologians to purge the Christian faith of the miraculous, he finds himself confronted with "a scene of the most boundless confusion." "A series of experiments are repeated with constant varying modifications suggested by the results furnished by the subsidiary sciences. Most of the writers, however, have no suspicion that they are merely repeating an experiment which has often been made before. Some of them discover this in the course of their work to their own great astonishment."

Toward the close of his book Schweitzer makes for himself and for German scholars generally a frank confession. "We thought," he says, "that we could build up by the increase of historical knowledge a new and vigorous Christianity. . . . We thought that it was for us to lead our time by a round-about way through the historical Jesus in order to bring it to the Jesus who is a spiritual power in the present. . . . We have made Jesus hold another language with our time from that which he really held. In the process we ourselves have been enfeebled, and have robbed our own thoughts of their vigor. . . . It is nothing less than a misfortune for modern theology that it mixes history with everything, and ends by being proud of the skill with which it finds its own thoughts, even to its beggarly pseudo-metaphysic with which it has banished genuine speculative metaphysic from the sphere of religion in Jesus, and represents him as expressing them" (p. 398).

We take three of the names in this tragedy of wasted toil, Reimarus, Strauss, and Baur. In point of scholarship, of literary genius, and of

intellectual power, they are the three most arresting figures in what is, in effect, a gallery of theological failures.

Schweitzer finds no praise too high for the literary skill of Reimarus. Of his book, *The Aims of Jesus and His Disciples*, he says, "It is a magnificent piece of work, one of the greatest events in the history of criticism, a masterpiece of general literature." Its aim was to "reconstruct" Christ himself, as well as his history, on non-miraculous lines. And curiously enough, the inspiration of Reimarus' great book was Hate—hate not so much of the Person of Christ, but of the miraculous element in him. And Hate as well as Love, Schweitzer tells us, can write a Life of Jesus; and the greatest of them are written with hate—that of Reimarus and that of David Friedrich Strauss. They were eager to picture Christ as truly and purely human, to strip from him the robes of splendor with which he had been appareled, and to clothe him once more with the "coarse garments in which he had walked in Galilee" (p. 5). A study of the Life of Jesus through the spectacles of Hate must have been a very strange experience. Wit is not the usual characteristic of the German mind but Reimarus had that gift and his hate gave it a sharp edge.

His book, when published, found a wide circle of readers but with all its brilliancy it failed. But it is significant to note that what may be called the theological mind of Germany, not to say the general trend of public opinion as far as it was capable of forming an opinion on theological subjects, was wholly against the new ver-

sion of Christianity which Reimarus invented and Strauss adopted. Reimarus himself was conscious of this, and his chief work, *The Aims of Jesus and His Disciples,* remained unpublished until after his death. Strauss, too, knew that his theology was unpopular. His *Life of Jesus* was published when he was a young man about twenty-seven, and in a sense it was his professional ruin. "I might well bear a grudge against my book," he wrote twenty-five years later, "for it has done much evil. It has excluded me from free public teaching, in which I took a pleasure. It has torn me from natural relationships and drawn me into unnatural ones; it has made my life a lonely one." And yet he claimed that writing and publishing his book "had preserved the inward health of his mind and heart."

Both these writers, however, have seriously influenced German theology in at least one, and that an evil, direction. They helped to destroy the divine atmosphere that hitherto had gathered round the Figure of Christ in the early history of Christianity. They gave every German theologian a new courage in distorting the history of the Christian faith into the pattern of his own ideas. Other scholars adopted the methods of Reimarus and of Strauss, even though they used them to produce results different from theirs. The influence of Strauss in this respect was perhaps even more deadly than that of Reimarus. Schweitzer himself says, "The critical study of the Life of Jesus by German theologians falls into two periods, that before Strauss and that after Strauss"; and since their day the theory that miracles must be dismissed as myths from the his-

tory of the birth of Christianity has become almost a platitude in German theology.

F. C. Baur lacked the literary brilliancy of Reimarus and he had not, perhaps, the personal force of Strauss, but in scholarship he was at least their equal and in some qualities of personal character he was far beyond them. He had conscience, and when in 1826 he was called to the Chair of Historical Theology in Tübingen he hesitated to take it, counting himself too young for that great post. He had an intensity of industry rare even in German scholars. He rose at 4 A. M. throughout the whole year, filling a long day with toil, and as a sign of his kindly temper, in winter mornings when the ink in his ink-bottle was frozen he would have no fire kindled, out of consideration for his servants. His scheme of theology had a broader base than that of his predecessors; it rested on two great—and quite unproved—assumptions. (1) That the element of the miraculous in Christianity was a fiction: (2) a theory which he borrowed from Hegel, that human thought moves in a perpetually recurring and triple rhythm of affirmation, negation, and synthesis of opposites. This triple rhythm Baur taught held good in theology, in history, and through the whole universe. On this reading early Christian history took the form of a conflict between the Jewish element represented by Peter and what may be called the Greek element represented by Paul. This imaginary rhythm of conflict and conciliation, in the course of a century found its synthesis, strange to say, in the Roman Catholic Church of the second century. Baur redistributed the events and dates of the

gospels to suit this theory and in the whole history of German theology no other theory won a fame so sudden, so wide and it must be added so brief. His theory was found to be in conflict with the plain text of the gospels and with the very almanac of the story and of the literature of the gospels and fell into almost universal disrepute.

Here, then, were three brilliant and commanding figures in German literature. No other names in the whole stretch of a century can compare with these for scholarship, for brilliancy of intellectual powers. But they failed; they created no school, they evolved no reading of the Christian faith which survives, they had no successors. No doubt they set an example—*quantum valeat* —of a courage without precedent in dissecting the gospels, in reading strange meanings into them, and tearing accepted old truths out of them; and smaller men follow their example. But their particular theories died with them. There has never since been such a concentration of scholarship so high, of a recklessness of speculation so courageous, as that they expended in the attempt to create a form of Christianity exhausted of the miraculous element; but they left no heirs to their theories, and where Reimarus, Strauss, and Baur failed smaller men will certainly not succeed. Schweitzer himself closes his story of the quest of the historical Jesus with the words, "Those who are fond of talking about negative theology can find their account here. There is nothing more negative than the result of the critical study of the life of Jesus." Then he describes how the real historical Christ re-

turns: "He came to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lake side, he came to those men who knew him not. He speaks to us the same word: 'Follow thou me!' and sets us to the tasks which he has to fulfill for one time. He commands. And to those who obey him, whether they be wise or simple, he will reveal himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in his fellowship, and as an ineffable mystery they shall learn in their own experience who he is."

CHAPTER III

THE MIRACLES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

As we have shown elsewhere there are only two intelligible positions in regard to miracles; first, that taken by most German scholars—that miracles are impossible, they have no place in the system of things, and should have none in the Bible. German theologians, it will be seen, allow God to create his world, and then they dismiss him from it. His place as a force in human affairs is taken by the laws of Nature—an iron succession of events in which pity has no room and prayer no office. It is a theory which limits the authority of God and leaves at least one half the Bible without any meaning. For in the actual Bible which God in his providence has given us, what a place, large and high, is given to miracles! The Incarnation itself is the greatest of miracles and makes all others credible.

As Christian faith interprets them, miracles represent one form of God's activities, one way in which his personal will expresses itself. What we call the "laws of Nature" are another form. "Law," says Newman, "is not a cause but a fact. When we come to the question of cause, then we have no experience of any cause but will," and throughout the universe it is the will of God that acts. The notion of "natural laws" as independ-

ent categories of imperative force may certainly be dismissed as unscientific, not to say absurd. Newman was a theologian, but a famous scientist practically agrees with him, though he uses other terms.

"A law of Nature in the scientific sense," says Huxley, "is the product of a mental operation upon the facts of Nature which come under our observation and has no more existence outside the mind than color has."

And beside Huxley may be placed a more modern but almost equally great scientist. "Look," says Sir Oliver Lodge, "for the action of the Deity, if at all, then always; not in the past alone, not only in the future, but equally in the present. If his action is not visible now it never will be, and never has been visible." It is clear that granted the personal mind of the Creator in his own creation miracles are possible. "Once admit of God," says J. S. Mill, "and the production of an effect by his direct volition must be reckoned with as a serious possibility."

The whole drift of modern thought to-day, in brief, is running in the direction of the recognition of miracles. We have only to realize, indeed, the actual place that we ourselves have in the realm of natural laws to realize the credibility of miracles. "Every action of the human free will," says Lord Kelvin, "is a miracle to physical and chemical and mathematical science." And can we imagine that to his creature, man, God has given a power to use the laws of Nature as tools for giving effect to his will, and has himself no such power? The miracles of the New Testament, it may be added, are made credible by their con-

text, they form part of a great history which attests them and which is unintelligible without them. Their context is the whole redemptive scheme of Christianity; they are, on the Christian theory, incidents in the life of a supernatural Teacher and Saviour. Granted that there broke in on human history—a history disordered by sin—the figure of a divine Person, himself completely out of the "natural" order, it was inevitable that this sudden emergence of the supernatural would register itself at a hundred points in supernatural events.

And Christ's miracles of pity have for us—who did not see them, but only read of them—a gracious and divine office. They are far-running prophecies, prophecies of the time when Christ's gospel having accomplished its end there shall be no more curse; God shall wipe away all tears from weeping eyes; there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. How much of hope would slip from the pages of the Bible if Christ's miracles were to be dismissed as forgeries or mistakes!

Now between these two positions there stands a third, which has neither the courage of the German position nor the faith of what may be called the Christian position. It does not bluntly dismiss miracles, nor yet does it frankly accept them, but it has a settled and visible bias *against* miracles—a bias which is not always avowed, but clearly exists. Miracles are dismissed from history on any excuse—the want of agreement in the accounts given, or a look of strangeness in the details. Great ingenuity is displayed in reducing the number of miracles and equal ingenuity

is displayed in robbing any which survive of their "miraculous" character. This is the almost universal treatment of the miraculous in the literature of the British Higher Criticism and *it is one of the points at which it fails.*

Its eagerness to reduce the miraculous element in the gospels is an inheritance from the evolution theory; yet the popular discredit of miracles which was one of the early results of Darwin's theory has almost wholly passed away. The theory of evolution itself as it is now modified finds a place for miracles, and the common sense of the world realizes that no reading of the facts of nature and of the divine method on which the world is governed can blot out the possibility of miracles. The area of natural law within which man is using these laws as tools, bending them to purposes beyond their own reach, widens every day; and as we have said, what is true of man must be in a yet larger sense true of God.

It would be easy to multiply examples of the unscientific attitude towards miracles which it is claimed on "scientific" grounds the Higher Criticism adopts. Dr. Sanday is in some respects one of the sanest of the Higher Critics, and his plan was not to deny the incident which required a miracle for its explanation but to invent some method of "explaining" it on non-miraculous grounds. As an example of his method of exhausting Christ's miracles of any miraculous quality his treatment of the feeding of the four thousand may be taken. Christ, he says, did feed that multitude with that handful of bread; but he explains, it was in the manner in which those who partake of the Lord's Supper are fed—each

of the four thousand received a crumb. It was a quasi-sacramental meal. There was no miracle; none was needed! That "explanation" is deliciously simple, but what a very simple mind one must have who accepts it!

Later examples of this method of disposing of miracles are supplied by the article on "The Life and Teaching of Jesus" in Peake's Commentary, by Mr. H. G. Wood, M.A. He sets out by warning his readers that "suspicion and doubt of various kinds and degrees attach to many of the stories of miracles in the New Testament," a sentence which serves to cast a veil of darkness and uncertainty over nearly the whole area of Christ's miracles. Mr. Wood then proceeds to give examples of the miracles on which lie "suspicion and doubt of various kinds and degrees." He takes a cluster of miracles almost at haphazard, ranging from the withering of the fig-tree up to the raising of Lazarus, and dismisses them all in three brief sentences!

We "may reject the withering of the fig-tree," we are told, "because such a miracle of destruction seems to us unlike Jesus"; or because it "seems to be an instance in which a miracle has grown out of a parable." The incredible miracle has its birth in an unknown parable! The story of the coin in the fish's mouth we are encouraged to reject because "the basis of the story is a folklore motive." *That* is the very thing to be proved, and it is taken for granted! It will be observed that these miracles are not indicted and dismissed for reasons of scholarship; there is nothing in the original record which makes their story incredible. Mr. Wood asks us to doubt

them because, in substance, they are not the kind of miracles or are not reached by methods of which Mr. Wood himself approves. For Mr. Wood begins his study of the miracles with a presupposition of the kind of miracles which Jesus might be expected to perform; of the manner which it seemed probable he would adopt; and he rejects those miracles which do not fit in with his own presuppositions.

We are thus advised to "hesitate" in our acceptance of the raising of Lazarus as "history," and for a reason so simple that it can be expressed in six words—"the strange silence of the Synoptists." Now the raising of Lazarus marks one of the great and critical moments in the life of Christ himself and hardly any other incident has made so deep an impression on history. It was the incident that brought the hate of the scribes to a climax against Jesus and hastened his crucifixion. If the story was an invention half—if not the whole of—the population of Jerusalem must have known it to be a lie. What is it which should make us willing to surrender the whole story of how Jesus wept, and the great words, "I am the resurrection and the life," which we all hope will be read over our own graves? Mr. H. G. Wood wants us to surrender one of the most sacred incidents in the life of Christ on account of "the strange silence of the Synoptists." In Mr. Wood's opinion the story of the raising of Lazarus ought to have been told in the four gospels, and as the Synoptists do not share that view the miracle itself becomes incredible! This can hardly be described as sane criticism.

Perhaps the most sacred and miraculous inci-

dent in the story of the incarnation is the virgin birth of Christ, and Mr. H. G. Wood dismisses this at once, and peremptorily, into space. "It is no longer possible," he says, "to insist on the literal accuracy of the gospel incidents, and *this is particularly true of the story of the virgin birth and of the resurrection.*" The reader is entitled to ask, "What is the cruel but irresistible logic that compels us to dismiss not only the story of the virgin birth but of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the place they have held for over two thousand years in the faith of Christian people?" Mr. Wood's explanation has at least the merit of an almost childlike, not to say childish, simplicity. "As regards the birth stories in Matthew and Luke," Principal E. Griffith-Jones says, "we find ourselves in doubt on many points, and there is reason to believe that *a reverent imagination has been at work on traditional material*" (p. 15).

With great politeness and with a couple of soft and evasive phrases the great story of the virgin birth of Christ is thus dissolved into vapor. Principal Griffith-Jones is not rude enough to say that the whole story is a myth or that the witnesses to it lie. There was, he admits, some "material" at the basis of the story but it was only of a "traditional"—that is, a non-historic—character. The human imagination had worked on that tradition but it was a "reverent" imagination and under its action the story had become a myth.

The adjective in the quotation here given is unfortunate, for if the story is purely a work of imagination that imagination can hardly have been of a "reverent" character, as its product is a

tissue of falsehoods. The incident of the angel, for example, who appeared to Mary with the greeting, "Hail thou that art highly favored. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women"; and Mary's answer, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to thy word," are pure inventions. But in effect, Principal Griffith-Jones, to put it bluntly, says the story of the virgin birth is a lie, though he wraps up the lie in a mist of soft phrases.

But beside the slightness of the reason urged for rejecting the story of the virgin birth let us set the scale and significance of the event itself. It is of priceless value to the Christian faith. Two evangelists out of the four tell the story at length. It forms part of the oldest of all the Christian creeds, the Apostles' Creed. If it has to be dismissed as a flight of imagination we must tear out half of the first chapter in Matthew's Gospel and two thirds of the first chapter in that of Luke. In place of the exquisite figure of Mary, "Blessed art thou among women," with that burst of divine poetry—a New Testament psalm—"My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden; for, behold, from henceforth, all generations shall call me blessed"—in all this we are asked to see an unchaste woman, who was with child before she was a wife; and Jesus Christ, on this reading, came into our world through the gate of lust—a horrible suggestion!

Principal Griffith-Jones, to do him justice, does produce one tiny argument of a more practical kind. The story of the virgin birth, he says, is

incredible because "it is impossible to harmonize the various versions." We are assured, in addition, that this impossibility of "harmonizing the various stories" is equally true, and even particularly true, of the resurrection of Jesus Christ! The logic which would deny the chastity of the mother of our Lord thus is equally valid to seal the grave of Jesus Christ. And a phrase of only eight words accomplishes all this! We are not asked to challenge the scholarship of these critics or to disprove their reading of difficult passages in some ancient document. We are required to mutilate the New Testament, to cut out one of the articles of the Apostles' Creed, to let go a history so sacred and beautiful and so vital to Christian faith, because Principal Griffith-Jones thinks it is impossible to "harmonize the various versions"!

But at this point critic refutes critic. Sanday, himself a Higher Critic of great authority, says of the two versions of the virgin birth that "they are, fundamentally, quite independent of each other; but each, in a strange way, supplements the other." He adds that "the belief in the virgin birth is firmly established in the oldest form of the Apostles' Creed, and this fixed place, once gained, has never been lost." "The two versions," which Peake's Commentary assures us contradict each other and make the virgin birth incredible, in the judgment of Sanday "point back to an original kernel of fact, and were designed by God to enter into the providential order of history" (*Miracle*, p. 15). It is thus seen that a Higher Critic of greater authority than any one of the sixty-four writers in *Peake's Commentary* firmly

holds to the truth of the virgin birth of Christ which some of them, at least, deny.

The true motive of the critics is the desire to attenuate the miraculous element in the Christian story; but they cannot do this without tearing the Bible itself into rags. For the miraculous is woven into every fiber of Christ's story. The biggest miracle of all is the entrance into human life, into human form, of the eternal Son of God, and that makes possible all smaller miracles attending it, such as the sinless manner of Christ's birth.

CHAPTER IV

THE GREATEST—AND THE MOST FORGOTTEN—MIRACLE OF CHRISTIAN HISTORY

One of the greatest miracles of history is the Christian church; it followed the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but took a form that was quite unexpected. The Christ of the cross, with nailed hands and feet, the mockery of a crown on his forehead, with not a follower left, the might and authority of Rome arrayed against him, the Jewish Sanhedrin watching that crushed and desolate figure with eyes of triumphant hate—was there ever such a spectacle of defeat! He was left without a follower. Socrates sat among a group of devoted followers as he drank the hemlock; Christ had on either side of him a crucified thief, and from one of these alone—when all his disciples had fled—there came a word of faith.

The grave in which his torn body lay was sealed with the authority of Rome and Roman soldiers kept guard over it. And yet neither the power of death nor the armed strength of Rome nor the hate of the Jewish Sanhedrin could keep that grave sealed. Life came back to the torn body, the seal of Rome on the tomb was broken, and the risen Christ came out victorious over death, with every sign of shame and hate effaced.

Now it is easy to imagine a use being made of Christ's resurrection which would have startled the world, proclaimed the defeat of his enemies, and have given him an immediate triumph. Suppose, for example, that stepping from the broken door of that tomb he had called his disciples about him and ridden in open triumph through the streets of Jerusalem, unhurt from the wounds of the cross and in visible triumph over death. How the spectacle would have startled the world! What wondering crowds would have followed him, strewing flowers before his path; as he came once more to the descent of the Mount of Olives how the multitudes would have cast their garments on the road before him, and with what deeper tumult of rejoicing voices the chant would have been raised: "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord." The cross to which he was nailed represented the authority of Rome; and what a national triumph it would have seemed—what a defeat over Rome—to see Christ, unhurt by death, riding in kingly state through the streets of Jerusalem! The spectacle would have set the Jewish imagination on fire; it would have been accepted as a sign of victory over the Roman legions; it would have left the hate of the Sanhedrin powerless and defeated.

Why was not an immediate and public use made of the resurrection of Jesus Christ? It was an event which would have startled the whole imagination of the world. No other part in the story of Jesus Christ is so charged with wonder and mystery as the days which followed after he stepped unhurt from the tomb, and yet about no other part of Christ's story is so little told as

about the forty days between his resurrection and his ascension. The reason is that his resurrection, if turned into a public spectacle, might have achieved a political victory for the Jewish nation, but it would have defeated the very purpose of the broken grave. Its objective was something infinitely greater than anything in the realm of politics—a spiritual victory which was to change the whole history of the world; and plainly the spiritual meaning of the resurrection was first to be explained to the faith and set on fire the imagination of Christ's followers.

So Christ did not go back to the familiar companionships of his earthly ministry; a veil is drawn over the state of Jesus Christ during those forty days. He had not yet ascended into heaven, and we are left to wonder whether hosts of angels unseen by human eyes hovered round him. There are some things beyond the reach of the human imagination and about which no questions can be asked.

Christ first appeared to selected followers at intervals: then he called them from the tumult of Jerusalem to the quiet of Galilee. "Go, tell my brethren," he said, "that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me." But we get only glimpses of what took place even at Galilee. How natural it is to long for a full report of his words when as victor over the cross and the grave he "spoke to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God"! It is clear that even in the profound emotions of those great events the obstinate Jewish mind of some at least of his disciples was clinging to the dream of a political triumph. "When they therefore were come to-

gether, they asked of him, saying: 'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?'" And Christ put that request gently aside: "It is not for you to know the times, or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." During those forty days he was cleansing the minds of his followers—the men who were to be the first messengers of the completed gospel—from political and national dreams. Something infinitely greater than a political triumph over Rome, an earthly kingship, was the goal of Christ's work. That endowment of spiritual power which was to come upon them had to be explained; they had to learn that proclamation of the gospel of salvation through the cross of Christ which was to reshape the history of the world.

But what was that mysterious gift of "power" that was to equip them for that tremendous task which was to come upon them? "Ye shall receive power," he said, "*when the Holy Ghost is come upon you.*" And their field was to be beyond all national victories: "Ye shall be witnesses of me, not only in Jerusalem, and in Judæa, and in Samaria, but in the uttermost part of the earth." No wonder that to set on fire their imagination and to kindle their faith to such a scale took forty days between the resurrection and the descent of the Holy Ghost! The sense of some great coming endowment must have fallen upon them; some vision of great spiritual ends to be achieved. The petty politics of the nation were forgotten; they were learning to think in spiritual terms, in terms not of the nation but of the world. Peter, always practical, desired to fill up the gap in their organ-

ization made by the crime and death of Judas, and he persuaded them to choose one to take his place in the apostolate; and the choice was made by lot, with due prayer, the lot falling upon Matthias. But it is clear that he was not the divine choice, for his name is never mentioned afterward; God made, in due time, his own choice.

There were three great stages in the salvation of the world: (1) the redemptive act of the cross itself; (2) the defeat of death achieved for our race shown by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But there remained the third event—the entrance into human life of a new spiritual force, the Holy Ghost, the Agent by which the redemptive forces of the cross were to be brought to bear upon human lives. And for the descent of that force upon the first ministers of the gospel the disciples were bidden "to wait" until they had come into perfect agreement with the will of God. That point at last was reached, and as the story runs: "*When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting . . .*"

So the new stage in the spiritual salvation of the race came, and the first sign of it was that "they began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." National languages are barriers, signs of division, more difficult to cross than wide seas or mountain ranges; and as the first sign of the world-wide mission of the completed gospel the barriers of speech were broken down. This, it will be seen, is the true gospel for

all men and all nations, and with that sermon began the new spiritual history of the world.

No miracle is equal to that which changes the human soul, and the apostles themselves were visibly transfigured men. The cowards who had forsaken their Master, fleeing for their own lives and surrendering him to the cross, are lifted up now to a mood which shrinks from no peril, which has in it a note of triumphant victory. Their spokesman is the man who had thrice denied his Master when he had fallen into the hands of his enemies; and he now frames against this crowd of his fellow countrymen the most terrible of all indictments: By wicked hands they had crucified and slain "God's messenger, the hope of their race." He did not talk of national politics or of deliverance from the Roman yoke: "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly," ran his message, "*that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*" And the charge that the hope of their nation had come and they had crucified him, driven home by the power of the Holy Ghost, melted that crowd of Jews into weeping penitence: "Men and brethren," they cry, "what shall we do?" And Peter's answer is exactly in the gospel key: "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

And as a result of this sermon preached by the man who had denied his Master to the very crowd who had watched him on the cross the Christian church was born! It has stood the test of two thousand years. All the miracles which mark the ministry of Jesus Christ during his earthly min-

istry in a sense, are trivial compared with the miracles which, through twenty centuries, have followed his death and resurrection, of which the first result was the creation of a church composed of the disciples who had forsaken and denied him, and of a crowd of three thousand converted Jews who had mocked him on his cross. This is the miracle of miracles! It has been repeated in every age, by martyrs who have died for their faith down to our own day, by an unbroken chain of missionaries under every sky, and by evangelists in every nation. For the office of the Holy Ghost has never been withdrawn from the work of the Christian church. The witness to it is an unbroken chain of transfigured lives stretching through two thousand years; its result is the whole Christian church of to-day. To this very hour it keeps its inheritance of miracles!

BOOK IV

CHRIST AND THE CRITICS

"I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

—JOHN 8. 12.

"We live in a world where Jesus is the last word."—GLOVER.

CHAPTER I

THE BIOGRAPHY OF CHRIST

We are all liable to see truth in patches only and to see it out of perspective, and it may be added that the patch of truth we do see and delight to keep in sight is often determined not by its intrinsic importance but by our individual preference for it. Now the bias against the miraculous which affects the Higher Criticism generally subtly influences its memory. It predisposes it to let slip some aspects of truth with which it is out of sympathy, and this bias deflects the judgment of at least some of the Higher Critics on Christ himself. They emphasize the human element in him and attenuate the divine. In particular it makes them confine their analysis of Christ to the thirty-three years of his earthly life and so they fail to see him in the perspective of history. They do not conceive of him as a personal Presence still in the world, and in the full sweep of his redeeming office and power through every day of the two thousand years of Christian history, as much as in any day of the three years of his ministry in Palestine. The wiser minds of the critics, to do them justice, are conscious of this peril and it would be amusing, if it were not so pathetic, to notice how at the Cambridge Conference of the Churchmen's Union in 1921 the speakers accuse each other—as one

of their number, Mr. Emmet, put it—of "making Jesus unimportant and uninteresting." On Canon Barnes' description of Jesus Dr. Foakes-Jackson is very severe. "The terms he employed," he says, "strike one as slightly patronizing." Mr. Emmet, in his turn, deals faithfully with both Dr. Foakes-Jackson and Dr. Lake in their much-debated book, *The Beginnings of Christianity*. "They give us," he says, "a view which suggests that though Jesus existed he did not really count. It is the picture of a very commonplace and uninspiring prophet, differing from the prophet of the Liberal-Protestant in that he only taught much what other people had already taught, except for a few original remarks which were either untrue or quite unpractical. He allowed his followers to address him as 'Sir,' and he spoke of some one else as the Son of Man." "Such a view," he argues, "explains neither the figure of Christ as given in the gospels, nor the impact of Jesus on his age."

Now that is true but it is not the whole truth. To see the true scale of Jesus Christ we must measure his impact not only on his age—the generation in which he lived—but on *all* the ages. What Christ was, and is, can only be adequately measured by the change he has wrought in the history of our race; it takes the whole span of the centuries to give us the true interpretation of his nature and work. And some of the Higher Critics in their analysis of Christ somehow forget to take the scale of the centuries by which to get the measure of his nature and work. They reach what Canon Barnes himself calls "an ingenuity of atomic disintegration, which a physi-

cist might envy, and so reach rejective conclusions which leave the personality of Christ exhausted of the miraculous." Now to explain the mark Christ has made, and is still making, on the history of our race in such a fashion is like offering the skipping-rope of a child as an explanation of the pull of gravitation. And the critics fail to see that by reducing to the vanishing point the element of the miraculous in Christ himself, the miraculous quality of his mark on twenty centuries is increased to the *n*th. For the biography of Christ and the impact of his touch on twenty centuries is the very miracle of miracles, and it is a miracle of which we ourselves to-day are both witnesses and subjects. It has the quality of eternity in it.

And let the secret of that strange power be remembered. Christ had foreseen the cross, and knew that in it for him was the secret of victory. "'I, if I be lifted up,' he said, 'will draw all men unto me.' This he said, signifying by what death he should die." And on the cross itself, while he hung there, abandoned and dying, he began a new discipleship; he saved the dying thief who hung beside him, an act which was a sign of the saving power which the cross gave him and a prophecy of the victories the cross should win. For the world was to be saved not by parables, or by miracles, or by wisest teaching, but by the one great Redemptive Act, of which the cross was the sign and the instrument. Then came the resurrection; and the cross, interpreted by the resurrection, is not a defeat. For Christ himself, for the race for which he died, it was a supreme victory, a victory over the last and the darkest

of all the forces of evil; by his death, death itself, the final enemy of our happiness, is slain. Here is a Force revealed which runs into eternity and can change the eternal destiny of every human soul committed to it. And it was the cross, linked to the twin and completing factor of the resurrection, which gave a new direction to the history of our race.

A complete biography of Jesus Christ would overwhelm us with knowledge beyond our power as yet to understand. The teaching of Christ, even for the apostles whom he drew around him, was limited by their capacity to receive it. "I have many things to say to you," he told them, "but ye are not able yet to receive them." If Christ gave us instructions and commandments dealing with every imaginable duty and peril of human life this would have been too vast either for the memory to hold or the mind to comprehend. Christ's method was of an exactly opposite character; he gave principles rather than specific commandments.

Then let it be remembered that Jesus Christ came not so much to *preach* the gospel as to *make* a gospel that could be preached. The supreme purpose of his incarnation looked Godward first and manward second. It offered a redeeming sacrifice for sin which made it possible for God to forgive sin; possible, in Paul's words, for God "to be just, and yet the justifier" of them that believe. It was the twin and equally great purpose of Christ's earthly life and atoning death to create a moral force—a spiritual appeal to the conscience, the will, and the heart of fallen men and women—sufficient to win them back to God.

"I," said Christ, "if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me." And from his cross, and by the overwhelming spiritual appeal of his cross, by the spiritual forces which stream from it, Christ *does* draw men unto himself. Now, whatever the four gospels do not tell us they certainly tell us the story of the cross with a clearness, a fullness, and with a moving power that make it the greatest moral force the human race knows. And the record that achieves that is the "biography of Jesus Christ"—the one biography the human race needs.

So we know when it began; but who shall tell us where it ends? Or *has it ended?*

The last picture of Jesus Christ offered to us by Saint Luke is as, with lifted hands, he stands on the path across the hill just as it dips down into Bethany, blessing the little group about him. "And it came to pass," says Luke, "that while he blessed them, he was parted from them and carried up into heaven." Luke does not tell us what were the final words with which Christ passed as a visible Presence from the sight of his disciples but they are given by Matthew. Christ had given to the disciples their great command. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations . . . to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." These seemed words of farewell; but then came the great words which forever canceled them: "*Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world!*" What a sublime paradox! In the act of leaving his disciples Christ declares he is "with them alway, even unto the end of the world"!

For Christ the flesh was an imprisonment; he

was held by it under the limitations of time and space. This is why he told his disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away." We are tempted to envy the men and women who gathered round the visible presence of Christ in the days of his earthly ministry. What price would we not pay to have the visible Christ passing through the streets, say, of London, of Paris, of Sydney, the children casting branches before him as he walked; the Christ of the miracles, opening blind eyes, raising the dead! But we have Christ in a greater and more wonderful Presence still with us. Christ stepped out of the realm of the flesh into the realm of the spirit that he might become a Universal Presence; a Presence not only as real as he was to the crowds in the streets of Capernaum or Jerusalem, but as much closer to us than he was to them as the touch of the Spirit is closer than the touch of the flesh. "Wheresoever," says Christ, "two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." He does not break in upon our senses, but, as Tennyson reminds us, "spirit with spirit can meet."

Christ, in plain words, is every man's contemporary! He is the living Christ of 1922 A. D., as he was the Christ of 33 A. D. He is the Christ of the Thames, of the Ganges, as surely as he was the Christ of the Jordan and Gennesaret, the Christ of London and New York as he was the Christ of Nazareth and Capernaum. The "biography" of Christ takes in the two thousand years of Christian history; and what kind of events make up this, the true record of Jesus of Nazareth? Every spiritual victory won in the lives

of men and women since Christ died on the cross is part of his biography. Less than six weeks after Peter, a shivering coward at the charge of a servant maid, had denied his master with oaths and curses he was preaching to a crowd of thousands of Jews the terrible sermon in which he told them that "with wicked hands they had crucified and slain" the Christ in whom every hope of their nation and of the human race itself had come into flower—and he won three thousand converts by that one sermon. *That* is part of the "biography" of Jesus of Nazareth!

When Stephen, the first Christian martyr, as the tempest of cruel stones was beating out his life looked up into heaven and with a loud voice cried, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"; then, kneeling down, cried, "Lord, lay not this to their charge"; and when he had said this fell asleep—this, too, is part of the biography and record of Christ. Paul had an amazing career—he founded church after church; he wrote fourteen out of the twenty-one Epistles in the New Testament—tiny bits of literature that to-day have more readers and touch human life and character with deeper influence than the writings of all the poets and sages from Plato down to Shakespeare; and he, too, was a part of the "biography" of Christ. "It is no longer I that live," he said, "it is Christ that liveth in me."

The Christian church itself, with its far-spread missions, its countless agencies for healing the running sore of the world, is but a part of his "biography." The records of twenty Christian centuries are so many leaves in that divine record. Every man and woman to-day who by Christ's

grace is saved, and who is living by his law and in the strength of that grace, is a bit of the "biography" of Jesus Christ. "Ye are my witnesses," Christ says to us all. Every pulse of spiritual life we feel in our blood comes from Christ. "Verily, verily, I say unto you," run Christ's words, "he that believeth on me the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father." And if love triumphs over hate in any human life; if purity takes the place of vice, and self-sacrifice displaces selfishness as the rule of conduct; that is an *effect* of which Jesus Christ is the *cause.* It is part of his biography.

Who shall write this wonderful biography? No human hand can write it; no human mind can measure its sweep. To say that the "biography" of Christ can only be written when the latest record of time is closed is quite inadequate. The measures of time can find no space for this "biography." It takes in, and runs through, the never-ending ages of eternity.

The Higher Criticism of to-day, we have said, fails by the things it forgets. It would be absurd, of course, to say that the scholars and the divines who in such numbers call themselves Higher Critics do not know as well as their critics know that what is here described as the true biography of Christ is the part he has played in all the centuries behind us and will play in all the centuries to come. But this is clear—that in the published analysis of the character and the work of Christ on which they venture with such courage the true biography of Christ finds no place. It is only by dismissing this from the picture that

Canon Barnes, for example, in the paper he read to the Modernist Conference of 1921, found it possible to condense an explanation of Christ into exactly ten sentences, such as: "His origin was humble. It is unlikely that he had an exceptional education. Clearly his natural ability was great." The explanation of Christ offered again in Peake's Commentary by Principal Griffith-Jones is in exactly the same key. Christ, we are assured, "bears mark of the culture and outlook on life that belonged to his age and his environment. He was one who knew little, if anything, of Greek philosophy," etc. This is not the whole Christ; it is not the true Christ. How much both these Higher Critics have forgotten before packing the Christ of all the ages into such a tiny nutshell! Mr. Emmet, B.D., as we have shown, warns his fellow Higher Critics that their view of Christ "does not explain his impact on history"; but not even Mr. Emmet makes any attempt to estimate what the "impact of Christ on history" really is. He would have to write what no human pen can ever write—"the True Biography of Jesus Christ"—to do this!

CHAPTER II

CHRIST AND THE HIGHER CRITICISM

For all systems of criticism—High or Low—the supreme testing-point is that at which they touch Christ, and methods and results alike must be judged by the place and the degree of authority they give to him. If they whittle him down into merely human terms, deny his Godhead and sit in judgment on his words they practically rob us of Christ; and Christianity without Christ would leave Jewish history without an explanation and the Bible without meaning. Historic Christianity itself, with its generations of saints, its transfiguring effect on history, the innumerable churches in which Christ is preached to-day, the missions it sends out, the divine forces with which it is penetrating our civilization—all becomes, if Christ be left out, an effect without a cause. Principal Griffith-Jones himself says: "Our religion stands or falls with faith in the Person of the historical Jesus." It may be added that he is himself disquieted by the treatment of Christ by some of his fellow-critics, and he tries to comfort himself and us by saying: "We are not in any way forced to concede all that the extreme critics claim. Much of their attitude of dubiety is due not to the pressure of the evidence, or to the lack of evidence, but to naturalistic preconceptions which force them to minimize the

evidence itself and to magnify the discrepancies in the narratives."

But on the other hand, if the claims of Christ are admitted—if he is the Incarnate Son of God who has come into this world to make a new revelation of God to us in terms of love, love of which the cross is the measure and the expression—this must profoundly affect all our views of the Bible. When this Christ speaks, even though his words run beyond the reach of our human thought they must be accepted. We cannot venture to put the little tape of our human understanding round his infinite knowledge and determine where it ends and ignorance takes its place. He comes to judge us; we dare not pretend to sit in judgment on him. Of two fundamentally opposite courses, in brief, only one is logically possible. We may accept Christ and sit at his feet; or we may reject Christ and require him to sit at our feet. The third course—impossible to sane reason—is to *unite both methods*, to reduce Christ to human dimensions, and yet to insist that he keeps his divine offices as the Saviour of our race.

Now it is exactly at this point that, just now at least, the Higher Criticism fails, and it clearly fails for a curious reason of which it is apparently unconscious. In order to safeguard some of its positions, it must undertake an analysis of the personality and character of Christ, and determine the limits within which his authority must be accepted and his infallibility be acknowledged. It finds itself committed to a task in which human knowledge has hitherto failed—the task of analyzing and defining the psychology of the incarnation; a subject on which no information

is given us in the Bible, which may well be beyond the reach of any created intelligence, and about which a peeping curiosity is nothing less than an offense to reason.

The psychology of the incarnation! This is certainly the most tremendous question to which the human mind can address itself. The psychology of a little child, it must be remembered, is beyond all human science, and the wisest and most loving mother who ministers with the intimate knowledge only possible to a mother to the physical senses of her child cannot yet penetrate to the mystery of its unfolding senses. And the deeper mystery of how the tiny soul and mind within the little figure grow, how they relate themselves to the external world, how memory awakens, and makes its records, how intelligence comes—what wisest psychological science can read the mysterious cipher of even an infant's life!

But the *psychology of the incarnation*, the relation between the human and the divine in Jesus Christ, where one ended and the other began; how his infinite knowledge was hidden during the thirty years preceding the moment when his great office of Teacher and Saviour of the race began; and whether, and how far, his human limitations put in imprisoning darkness his Godhead, who can solve such problems? Has any human being the right to undertake their solution? To the critic undertaking such a task we might well quote the words of the Samaritan woman. "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep"—too deep for any human plummet to sound. And if we must explore and with our limited human faculties solve this tre-

mendous problem—a problem which might well move the awe and tax the faculties of angels—at least we should do it in a spirit of almost trembling reverence. We should put off the shoes from our feet before we venture to walk on ground so sacred.

But, strange to say, many of the Higher Critics start on this adventure with the most light-hearted confidence. Their little human foot rules are produced, and they take the measure of Christ. A patch here and a patch there is snipped off with their tiny scissors and they undertake to tell exactly the subjects on which Christ was ignorant. The incarnation has for them no secrets; they are able to tell us with scientific precision the subjects of which Christ was ignorant and what was the exact measure of that ignorance. They know more, it seems, than Christ did, and with their larger information can correct his teaching. Nearly all the discussions about Christ in the current literature of the Higher Criticism are deflected in this direction and while this mood lasts that literature—on this subject at least—is in quarrel with the general conscience and faith of the Christian church. Whatever views we take of the limitations of Jesus Christ, no intelligent Christian can consent to believe they apply to him as a Saviour, and so limited his saving office.

Christ, it is true, began his earthly life at the human level. He was a little child with the helplessness of a little child; he "grew in knowledge" as a child. For thirty years he lived under human conditions. He was a village carpenter. He knew toil and sweat, hunger and cold; and thus, hav-

ing satisfied all human conditions, and having come for so many years into partnership with us in all human relationships and experiences, his divine office began. *And it began with assuredly the full measure of divine knowledge and power.* What would be his value as a Teacher at this stage of the incarnation, if he still kept the untaught mind and the limited knowledge of the village carpenter? Shall we touch with our human fingers his sayings as they stand recorded in the New Testament and say, "Master, here thou knowest less than we do; thou camest to be our teacher but we can teach thee! Thou art the Light of the world, but on this subject, and on that, our little human candles outshine the divine flame which streams from thy words"?

Bishop Gore discusses with wise and reverent insight the question of the limitations of Christ's knowledge under the conditions of the incarnation. Christ himself said, in regard to the moment when the great drama of human history shall reach its climax, "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man. No, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son." "The limitation of knowledge that I can accept on his own authority," says Bishop Gore, "*that* I can understand. I can understand the Divine Person coming into our human life, to live under its conditions and its limitations, must have so accepted a certain limitation of knowledge, otherwise there could have been no true manhood, no real human faith and hope." Yes; the limitations to his knowledge which Christ himself proclaims and defines we can all admit. But is a poor human critic contemplating Christ through his spectacles, and

measuring his knowledge with his tiny human foot rule, entitled to say how far the knowledge of Christ ran and to fix the exact point at which it dissolved into complete ignorance? "He came," says Bishop Gore, "to teach men about God and lead them to God, and if *in his spiritual training* —and he gave no other—there was mistake and delusion, that does not seem to me to be compatible with the idea of the incarnation."

Now it is exactly at this point—on the range of knowledge possessed by Jesus Christ as Teacher and Saviour—that in the general Christian judgment the Higher Critics fail.

We take an example from among the Modernists. In the paper he read at the Cambridge Conference Canon Barnes set out by analyzing the nature and powers of Jesus Christ: "He was a Jew in whom there was no Gentile blood; but he was brought up in the half Jewish, partly Syrian, and partly Greek environment of Galilee. His origin was humble. He came from a workman's home. It is unlikely that he had an exceptional education. Yet though he normally spoke Aramaic he could certainly read Hebrew and he probably knew Greek. Clearly his natural ability was great. He used language with the skill of a great artist in words. He had closely studied the writings of the greatest religious teachers of his race, and his power to cure mental disorder was remarkable. His personality was extraordinarily impressive. He apparently refused to admit that he was good as God is good."

Now there are some sentences in that curious bit of literature which by their exaggerated irrelevance must prick the sense of humor as well

as shock the reverence of the reader: "*His origin was humble . . . it is unlikely that he had an exceptional education . . . he probably knew Greek . . . clearly his natural ability was great.*" If Canon Barnes was writing a testimonial for some one who had been his fellow student it would be worded—with a little variation—in very much the same manner. "Jones," he would say, "had not the advantages of a good education, but he is a good student, and won a scholarship at one of the universities. His natural ability is great; he has a fine presence and a certain bent of mind which would qualify him for the medical profession." The sentences Canon Barnes expended on the Saviour of the world in his paper at Cambridge practically amount to a "testimonial" of exactly this kind. But how much of Christ they leave out! Even his brother critics complained of this. Dr. Foakes-Jackson said there was a "patronizing" note in what he said of Christ. Mr. Emmet accused him of making Christ "unimportant and uninteresting."

Canon Barnes took a degree in science, and is tempted to translate his theology into the terms of physical science and to judge it by the tests of that science. He is in angry and perpetual quarrel with the "science of the Old Testament Scriptures," and it is not unfair to say that the deeper spiritual significance of the Scripture documents, the redeeming element in the work of Jesus Christ and the spiritual significance of his cross find a scanty place in his recollection. Here is an example of this: "Jesus in yielding up his life gave all that a man can to do God's will.

. . . He died that the kingdom of God might come. We rightly deem him Lord of the Kingdom of his Father because he was its perfect servant. All who strive to enter in profit by his services; they are to this extent enriched by the redemptive power of his innocent suffering." To this Dr. Foakes-Jackson says: "This passage does not describe what was known as 'evangelical' teaching, which laid stress on the redemptive, sacrificial, and saving power of the cross of Christ. An evangelical would no more accept this than he would Canon Barnes' description of the humbly born descendant of David who rose superior to an imperfect education."

The analysis of the personality of Jesus Christ which Principal Griffith-Jones contributes to Peake's Commentary on the Bible has a different starting-point from that of Canon Barnes. In the paper he read before the Cambridge Conference Canon Barnes applied the ordinary methods of psychology to the personality of Jesus Christ purely as a matter of science; but Principal Griffith-Jones was engaged in an attempt to discover the ultimate seat of authority in religion, and he had dismissed in succession the "inner light" of the mystic, the historic claim of the church, the Protestant theory of the Bible as the ultimate standard of religious truth; that, he found, was vested in Jesus Christ, and "properly understood," he declared, was "a profound truth." He proceeded, however, to warn his readers that the claim for "the ultimate authority of Jesus Christ" was sometimes "affirmed in a way difficult any longer to substantiate." The authority of Jesus in religion needed to be "more clearly de-

fined" than "by our fathers"; and by way of effecting that definition he proceeds, in his turn, to explore the psychology of the incarnation, and to map out and draw the exact line where the knowledge of Jesus Christ became ignorance and his claim to be the ultimate authority in religion ceased.

And Principal Griffith-Jones is more courageous and takes a wider sweep than even Canon Barnes. He dismisses Christ as an authority from history, science, the Bible, and even from one field, at least, of ethics and he does this in the interest of certain positions of the Higher Criticism. In view of the plain teaching of the Bible this might well seem absurd but Principal Griffith-Jones knew his business. He begins by striking out certain claims usually made for Christ; "We cannot claim infallibility for him," he says, "in questions of history, such as the authorship of Old Testament books, or on the problems of science. In these directions he must be quite frankly considered to have accepted the current notions of his time."

Like Canon Barnes he draws up a catalogue of the purely human conditions of Christ's life: "Jesus was a Jew of the first century, brought up under certain social and intellectual conditions very different from our own; bearing marks of the peculiar culture and outlook on life that belonged to his age and his environment." He then proceeds to recite some irrelevant details, after the fashion of Canon Barnes: "He knew little, if anything, of Greek philosophy, of Roman law, and nothing of the vast accumulation of knowledge which has been garnered and systematized

since his day." Next Principal Griffith-Jones draws attention to the uncertainties—or what some people call uncertainties—in the text of the gospel records: "The records of his life and teaching," he says, "are such that, while derived for the most part from eye-witnesses of his earthly presence and ministry, they can scarcely be described as contemporaneous. . . . It is impossible to prove in particular instances that we have his *ipsissima verba*"—a statement which with one poor drop of ink seems to exhaust the four gospels of historic value. As a result of all this we are told: "The conditions under which the gospel has come down to us leave us free to exercise a sane judgment on the applicability of many of his maxims to our own times. Their literal application—even if we are persuaded that we have them in their original form—is often impossible to-day." Therefore, "we are free to exercise our sane judgment in regard to these principles of Jesus Christ, interpreting them broadly, disentangling the inner principle from the outer form." Now after all this how much of the authority of Jesus Christ as the ultimate standard of religious truth is left?

Later in his article Principal Griffith-Jones repeats, enlarges, and makes more specific the statement: "We are still far from having any proof that we have the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus," by adding "*or any guarantee that the events of his life are related with absolute accuracy in the gospels.* In some very important passages it is impossible to harmonize the various versions. This is particularly true of the stories of the virgin birth and of the resurrection" (p. 15).

Now that, perhaps, is at the same time the most disquieting and the most challengeable of the positions taken by Principal Griffith-Jones. If this is true with what troubled and doubting eyes must we learn to read the book once deemed so divine! The Bible is a bundle of uncertainties; we may admire the beauty of Christ's life and acts, but must remember that we are "still far"—in the twentieth Christian century—from the certainty that these events "are related with absolute accuracy in the gospels." But what proof is offered of this tremendous statement? Have there been some discoveries which invalidate all the existing records of Christian history? Or in the realm of what may be called super-scholarship has some new light suddenly shone out which gives a fresh aspect to the whole Christian literature? Nothing of this sort has happened. It has suddenly occurred to the critics that Christ committed nothing to writing; his teaching was purely verbal and the accounts come to us filtered through all the uncertainties of human memory. They would not be accepted in any court of justice.

But the plain man who knows his Bible will ask, Is it true that no "guarantee," human or divine, has been given to us that the teaching of Christ and the events of his life are to be found in the gospels? Did not Christ himself leave us exactly such a "guarantee"—an express provision—that his teaching and the events of his life should be accurately remembered and recorded, so that in a sense and to the very end of time his voice should speak to men? "These things have I spoken unto you," he told his apostles, "being yet present with you." But he was about to

leave them; what was to fill the emptiness created by his departure? "The Comforter," he said, "which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father shall send in my Name, he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." The Higher Critics to sustain their position must either deny the existence of that promise or hold that God has broken his word and left this great promise unfulfilled.

But the New Testament as we find it is the fulfillment of that promise, and the inspiration which enabled its writers to recall what Christ had said and done is still in its very syllables. Its text is the channel through which divine light and force still stream into human life. The critics who expend oceans of ink and tempests of debate in settling—or unsettling—the dates of these records and their human authorship resemble a committee of scientists who, required to give an account of the electric light, spend their energies on the wire on which the electric force travels and leave out of their report the invisible force itself which *is* the light.

Literature has its miracles, and the New Testament is a literary miracle. Its writers were a cluster of Galilean fishermen and peasants; there was only one man of genius and scholarship in the group. And yet this book has reshaped the history of the world! In Stratford-on-Avon stands a great building in which all the books which were written about Shakespeare's plays are gathered. But if all the books which have caught their inspiration from the twenty-seven tiny pamphlets which constitute the New Testament were

gathered together no building ever yet erected by human architecture could contain them. That tiny book has built every church throughout Christendom. It has inspired all missionary effort. Its words are written on the tombstones beneath which our dead sleep. And the original inspiration which Christ promised was not confined to the men who wrote it. It is in the book itself to-day; it is within the reach of every reader of the book, and all Christian experience attests that fact.

Principal Griffith-Jones, of course, says many things about Christ in quite a different key from the passages we have quoted, for he still acts on his method of talking with two voices. "It is the testimony of the Christian consciousness," he says, "in all ages that to find Jesus is to find God. Beyond him we cannot go in our search for the Eternal, who in him has spoken his will as in no one else" (p. 8). He closes an article on "the Bible: its meaning and aim," with the words, "In the future, as in the past, the Bible revelation of God to man, of man to himself, is the subject of a divine redemption flowing from the Person and cross of Christ, and will shine forth with an undimmed and ever-growing luster" (p. 16). That is beautifully said; but if printed in parallel columns beside such passages in a totally different key as those we have quoted the plain man may well ask, What is its value?

CHAPTER III

DID CHRIST CAST OUT DEVILS?

The Rev. H. G. Wood, M.A., contributes to Peake's Commentary a bit of literature which has more disquieting qualities in it than perhaps the writer himself realizes. He is dealing with those miracles in which Christ claimed to cast out devils from devil-possessed lives. "Many of the stories related of Jesus," says Mr. Wood, "are stories of the healing of demoniacs, and in some of the cases of the cure of disease the disease is attributed to evil powers (for example, Luke 13. 16). From Mark's Gospel it appears that the driving out of demons was an essential part of the proclamation of the Kingdom. Jesus himself clearly believed in demons, and saw a proof of the nearness of the Kingdom in the downfall of their power. He apparently accepted the popular diagnosis of disease as due to demonic influence. *But for faith,*" he adds, "*this raises the question of the limitations of the knowledge of Jesus*" (Peake, p. 663).

Now the question here raised—"*the limitations of the knowledge of Jesus*"—is one from which the human mind might well shrink. The power of Christ registers itself in visible signs, but the *mind* of Christ—what is its height and depth, and what the sweep of its knowledge; what method shall we use when we address ourselves to *that*

task? To measure the brain of Plato, to assess the dramatic art of Euripides, to weigh in the scales of our understanding, and with scientific exactness, the genius of myriad-minded Shakespeare, might well task any genius. But to undertake to define the limitations of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, to mark the line when *that* knowledge became ignorance—who is sufficient for such a task? Mr. H. G. Wood, it may be suggested, might feel it too great for him.

As a matter of fact, however, Mr. Wood, using the methods of the Higher Criticism, undertakes this task with great confidence; and he is able to report that the problem of the relation between the human soul and the unseen powers of evil was one which "the limitations of the knowledge of Jesus" made too difficult for him. In his diagnosis of this particular problem he blundered; he misread the facts. The "limitations" of his knowledge made it possible for him to mistake some ordinary trouble of the brain, or of the nerves, for a case of Satanic possession. As a result Jesus Christ is revealed in the gospel as making himself ridiculous by going through the form of casting out a devil when no devil existed!

Now it is certain that Jesus Christ gave to the business of casting out devils a large place in his public ministry. He claims such a miracle as one of his credentials: "If I, by the finger of God," he said, "cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you" (Luke 11. 20). He had a formula in working this miracle which expressly recognized that some tormenting spirit had invaded a human soul. In Saint Mark's Gospel—in the very first chapter—the story is

told of the man in the synagogue with an unclean spirit; and Jesus "rebuked" the evil and tormenting spirit, saying, "Hold thy peace and come out of him." The same formula is used in the deliverance of the devil-possessed wretch in the tombs: "Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit," said Christ. He endowed his disciples with a measure of this power; to the Twelve when he sent them on the first missionary errand he gave "power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases."

It will be remembered that when standing in the presence of Festus and Agrippa Paul challenged doubt for its credentials. "Why," he asked, "should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?" And it may be asked with equal confidence, "Why should not Christ cast out devils?" It was the very purpose of his redeeming work; he has been doing this very work in this troubled world for over two thousand years; he is doing it to-day. It is a well-known psychological fact that under certain evil conditions the power of evil in human lives is tragically increased. Missionaries among the dark tribes, with their heathen practices, find cases which they diagnose with confidence as cases of devil-possession. Glover says there are many cases of this description in China. And in the age in which Christ was born why should we doubt there were such cases?

Bishop Gore, writing on this subject, says: "People glibly say that Christ shared the delusions of the age as to the existence of evil spirits. Well, he certainly talked of evil spirits. He certainly looked out upon the evil of the world and

he saw in it a rebel will behind men's will. 'An enemy,' he said, 'hath done this.' But I have yet to learn what is the superior wisdom which can say that that estimate of things is wrong in spite of and in the face of the experience of all the greatest saints of God." "I do not think," says Bishop Gore, "he was deluded. I see no right that men have to assume the sort of omniscience which should declare him in this respect deluded. I believe his word."

Bishop Gore, it will be seen, dryly hints that the Higher Critics claim omniscience for themselves in their explanation of what Christ really did. The omniscience is still there but it has changed its locality. It is the attribute not of Christ but of his critics. We are required to believe that *they* are omniscient!

But could anything more completely destroy the sense of the incomparable greatness of Jesus Christ, which is of the very essence of his story, than the criticism which discovers in Christ the characteristics and the limitations of the Galilean peasant of his day? He shared, it seems, the delusions of the peasantry folk among whom he was brought up. He had their rude medical theories, their belief in devils as the cause of diseases, etc. The critic notes his ignorance, his lack of outlook, his partnership in the blunders and exaggerations of his own followers. The profound impression that Christ—on any reading—made upon his hearers is in this way left unexplained, not to say incredible. Teaching on this subject in Peake's Commentary certainly goes perilously near making Jesus Christ ridiculous. He used the language of a miracle-worker, say-

ing to an imaginary devil, "Come out of him!" when as a matter of fact a dose of medicine was the true remedy needed.

"The blunder" of Christ is, on the principle of the Higher Criticism, explained by what is called the doctrine of the Kenosis: in the plan of the saving work of Jesus Christ, in order to put his human nature on a level with ours he emptied himself of his omniscience and stooped, on some subjects and for part of his life, to be ignorant; and, properly understood, that is certainly true. The general faith of the Christian church holds that the true Kenosis of Christ, however, stretches only through the thirty years in which he shared the common limitations of human life. He was the Galilean peasant or the village carpenter, sharing the toils and living under the conditions of those about him. But when he entered on the three years of his public ministry, and took up his office as a Teacher preparing for the great Redeeming Act by which we are saved—his death on the cross—we must assume that into every stage of that great saving ministry he brought all the knowledge necessary to it. To deny that, to teach that there was a blunder in the divine plan, to assert that Christ as a Teacher had no wiser or surer knowledge than the peasants about him, is an absurdity which has in it an element of blasphemy.

Now the interpretation of Christ's casting out devils which Mr. Wood offers assumes that the Kenosis somehow had got out of place; it did take in his office of teacher; it applied to the use of his miracle-working power! As a result, in the very moment and act of performing a miracle he

blundered! It was a double blunder; it extended to his office of teacher and of miracle-worker, for he believed and taught that there was a devil to be cast out of certain human lives, when as a matter of fact there was no devil in the case. And, properly considered, the blunder lay not in Christ's acting under the limitations of his Kenosis but in the mistake of the infinite wisdom of God, which gave to that Kenosis too wide a limit, so that Mr. H. G. Wood is able to report that Christ blundered into thinking that he could and did cast out a devil from some suffering human life, when as a matter of fact the patient only required medical treatment.

Mr. Wood further undertakes to define the precise blunder the Saviour committed. The real question is as to the reality of demoniacal possession—was there a devil to be cast out or not? But he puts the case in a very curious way: "Jesus Christ apparently accepted the popular diagnosis of disease as due to demonic influence. . . . If the belief in demons be entirely illusory—a modern assumption which is seldom questioned, though it is certainly questionable—then Jesus Christ was involved in a popular error. If the belief were only in part erroneous—and that it was in part superstitious can scarcely be doubted—then our records do not allow us to suppose that Jesus himself ever said anything to correct *the element of mistake in a belief which he shared with the people.*"

Note the number of "ifs" in that passage. The writer "hedges"; he obscures his meaning by that multiplicity of "ifs." The case as thus framed does not rest with the issue of whether

there was in the cases dealt with any real devil possession. Mr. Wood contents himself by showing that *if* the belief in demons was entirely illusory then Jesus was involved in a popular error. If the belief were only in part erroneous then Jesus Christ was culpable for not saying anything to correct the element of mistake in a belief which he shared with the common people.

But it has in it an element of the absurd to accuse Christ of failure in duty because he "did not correct the element of mistake in a belief which he shared with the common people." If Christ shared in that statement of belief how could he be expected to rebuke it? It was his own belief. The reader is tempted to think that Mr. Wood must have meant his words to run: "Christ failed to correct the element of mistake in a belief he *did not* share with the common people." If this be so Mr. Wood really brings a moral charge against Christ, the charge that while he knew the people were wrong in their diagnosis of the case of the demoniac he did not correct that wrong; nay, he traded on it by pretending to perform a miracle which was a sham!

An ignorant Christ! A Christ whose limitations of knowledge are so narrow that his diagnosis of even a sick body is not to be trusted! How much of hope slips out of human life if *that* be true! The New Testament claims again and again in every form of speech that Christ knew all men. "He needed not that any should testify of men, for he knew what was in men." He knew men as they did not know themselves; those innermost depths of personality, whose underlying motives and springs of action of which the pos-

sessor himself perhaps is not aware—every secret in the heart and conscience of men who were about him—all those lay open to his eyes. And this in part was the secret of Christ's power, the proof of his divine nature, for who can know what is in men but he who made men?

> "He took the suffering human race;
> He read each wound, each weakness clear."

And the perfect knowledge of Christ, rightly understood, is a reason not for fear but for hope; for it is love that knows us, the insight of love that reads our secrets, the love which alone can supply the remedy. Christ thrice asked the man who had thrice denied him the question: "Simon Peter, lovest thou me?" and at the third appeal Peter cries, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest I love thee." He could not have dared to call his fellow apostles to witness of his love for his Master; they knew his triple failure. But they did not know all things; and Peter turned his appeals from the half-knowledge, the partial judgment, of his comrades to the all-seeing knowledge of Christ.

But Mr. H. G. Wood thinks that we have to deal not with One who knows all things but One who is ignorant of a great many things; and if he blundered in reading the trouble of a sick body —a trouble perhaps of the nerves or the brain— how can we trust his diagnosis of our spiritual nature? The fatal—the unforgivable—effect of all such critical interpretations of Christ and his character and work is to belittle him. He was less than we imagined him to be; less than the

faith of bygone saints held him to be; than the hymns our children sing make him out to be. All our hymn-books would have to be revised if we accept the Christ offered to us in some pages in Peake's Commentary as an accurate portrait. Wesley says:

> "Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
> More than all in thee I find;"

but certainly the Christ who was so ignorant that he mistook, say, a nerve trouble for a case of diabolic passion, and believed that he had cast that non-existent devil out by a gesture, is not one to sing hymns about. "Jesus Christ," says Glover, in his *Jesus of History,* "transcends our categories and classification. We never exhaust him, and one element of Christian happiness is that there is always more in him than we supposed." But the critics labor with pathetic diligence to prove that there is *less* in Jesus Christ than we suppose! It is a very unlovely business.

CHAPTER IV

OPPOSING VOICES

It will help our readers, perhaps, to set the actual words on some of the greater subjects in debate, both of the Bible and of its critics, side by side in parallel columns, and it will be seen at a glance how wide is the interval between them. To compare what Christ says and claims about himself, and what some of his own ministers—the expositors and teachers of the Christian creed—have to say on what Christ claims may well perplex the plain mind. The critics are sincere; they are quite unconscious of any offense against either reason or faith in what they say. They believe quite honestly, indeed, that they are rendering a great and much-needed service to truth by their criticisms. And yet to plain sense the conflict of views thus presented has a tragical quality in it.

What the Critics say:	What the Bible says:
"There is not, either in Church or in Bible, any infallible authority for doctrinal truth, and we should face the fact."—Professor Sorley, *Modern Churchman*, p. 318.	"He that receiveth not my words hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."— John 12. 48.
"No belief, however	"The word which ye hear is not mine, but

scriptural we may be able to prove it, can claim the serious attention of thoughtful men and women to-day merely because it is scriptural."—Rev. R. G. Parsons, *Modern Churchman*, p. 301.

"There is no more reason for supposing that Jesus of Nazareth knew more than his contemporaries about the true scientific explanation of the mental diseases which current belief attributed to diabolic possession than that he knew more about the authorship of the Pentateuch or the Psalms." — Dean Rashdall, *Modern Churchman*, p. 281.

"Belief in the infallibility of Jesus is the

the Father's which sent me."—John 14. 24.

"I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee."—John 8. 17.

"Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." — John 6. 68.

"I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." —John 8. 12.

"That was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."—John 1. 9.

"For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Fa-

modern form of Docetism."[1]—PEAKE'S COMMENTARY, p. 663.

"We are still far from having any proof that we have the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus or any guarantee that the events of his life are related with absolute accuracy in the gospels. . . . It is no longer possible to insist on the literal accuracy of the gospel narratives."—PEAKE'S COMMENTARY, p. 15.

"The kingdom of God is a social ideal."—CANON BARNES, *Mod-*

ther's and of the holy angels."—LUKE 9. 26.

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and shall bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you."—JOHN 14. 26.

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life. . . . That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you."—1 JOHN 1. 1-3.

"The kingdom of God is within you."—LUKE 17. 21.

[1]The Docetic doubted the reality of the incarnation, and says that our Lord's humanity was an appearance only, and nothing more.—BISHOP LIGHTFOOT, *Biblical Essays*, p. 113. Docetism: A term used to describe the opinion that the body of Christ was merely a phantom.—*Eadie's Cyclopaedia*, p. 222.

ern Churchman, p. 347.

"The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."—ROMANS 14. 17.

"Jesus claimed to be God's Son in a *moral sense*, in the sense in which all human beings are sons of God."—H. D. A. MAJOR, B.D., *Modern Churchman*, p. 276.

"He was in the highest sense a Son of God, not in spite of his humanity, but because his humanity was uniquely perfect." — CANON GLAZEBROOK, *Modern Churchman*, p. 210.

"What do we mean precisely when we ascribe divinity to Jesus? The leaders of the Conference are agreed in their answer that the deity of Jesus is to be seen in his perfect humanity." — H. D. A. MAJOR, B.D., *Modern Churchman*, p. 196.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." —JOHN 1. 1-4.

"I and my Father are one."—JOHN 10. 30.

"Ye believe in God; believe also in me."—JOHN 14, 1.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."—JOHN 8. 58.

"I do not for a moment suppose that Jesus ever thought of himself as God. Nor do I think that even the fourth Gospel so represents him."—Professor J. F. Bethune-Baker, *Modern Churchman*, p. 291.

"Jesus did not claim divinity for himself: Never in any critically well-attested sayings is there anything which suggests that his conscious relation to God was other than that of a man towards God—the attitude which he wished that all men should adopt towards God."—Dean Rashdall, *Modern Churchman*, p. 275.

"Whatever Jesus means by calling himself Son of God, or by saying (if he did say), 'I and My Father are one,' it is clear that he did not mean that he was identical, or (to use a metaphor) co-extensive with God."—

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."—John 1. 14.

"He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not."—John 1. 10.

"Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."—Hebrews 1. 3.

What the Nicene Creed says:

"I believe in . . . one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, Begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Be-

NOWELL SMITH, M.A., *Modern Churchman*, p. 267.

Jesus was "genuinely, utterly, completely, unreservedly human, a Palestinian Jew, a Galilean, a man who expressed himself in and through the conditions and limitations of life and thought peculiar to his own times and to the race of which he was a member."—REV. R. G. PARSONS, *Modern Churchman*, p. 306.

gotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made: Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven . . . and was made man, And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate."

CHAPTER V

THE CLAIMS OF THE HIGHER CRITICISM

The courage with which some, at least, of the Higher Critics proclaim the certainty of their own views is almost of an heroic quality; it defies doubt; it talks with a certain accent of infallibility. In his Fernley Lecture, for example, the Rev. G. Jackson, D.D., at present one of the tutors of the Wesleyan Church, said, "Christ's authority cannot be invoked to invalidate the findings of Biblical criticism;" and this he claimed was "now admitted on all hands, a few protesting voices merely emphasizing the general consent." That statement has what may be called the true Vatican accent of infallibility.

In the same lecture Dr. Jackson said, "We no longer believe that a Bible statement is necessarily true simply because it is a Bible statement." If cross-examined Dr. Jackson would probably qualify and explain those words. In a sense they are, of course, true. "Skin for skin, all that a man has will he give for his life," is a statement found in the Bible; but the speaker is Satan and the statement is a lie. But the average reader will certainly understand Dr. Jackson to mean that there is no certainty about the whole text of the Bible. Nobody can be quite sure of the truth of any passage in it. And every reader, on Dr. Jackson's principle, has the right Dr. Jackson himself

claims and exercises to sit in judgment on the Bible, and reject any passage in it which does not satisfy his taste or conscience. He may do this on the ground that Christ did not actually speak the words ascribed to him; or that if he did the reader of to-day knows better than Christ and can correct his views. Dr. Jackson, it may be taken for granted, does not mean this; he believes profoundly in the divinity of Christ, in the truth of the gospel message and the general authenticity of the gospel records. But he permits himself to make unguarded utterances that, in the etymological sense of the word, "offend"—make to stumble —the little ones of Christ's flock.

But later Higher Critics talk about the Bible in accents quite as positive as those of Dr. Jackson, and still less capable of explanation. Thus at the Modern Churchmen's Conference of 1921 the Rev. R. G. Parsons, M.A., laid down as a postulate that "No belief, however scriptural we may be able to prove it, can claim the serious attention of thoughtful men and women to-day merely because it is scriptural."[1] At the same Conference Professor Sorley said, "There is not, either in church or in Bible, any infallible authority for doctrinal truth, and we should face the fact."[2] It requires some courage to resist the learned names and loud assurances flung at us in a fashion so positive, and on the subject of the Higher Criticism a Reign of Terror of a mild and foolish sort exists. It claims to represent a "liberal reading of religion," an "advanced theology and scholar-

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[1] *Modern Churchman*, p. 301.
[2] *Modern Churchman*, p. 318.

ship;" to reject it is to be out of key with modern thought, etc., and such arrogant and semi-Papal utterances impress simple and timid souls.

But all this is pure nonsense; and while there is much in the Higher Criticism that is true and that is doing real service for truth, there is much also that cannot survive the test of plain common sense; and these extravagant statements about the Bible are of that character. Butler, with whom common sense rose to the height of genius, wrote in his *Analogy:* "There are persons who think it a strong objection against the authority of Scripture that it is not composed by rules of art agreed upon by critics, for polite and correct writing. And the scorn is inexpressible with which some of the prophetic parts of Scripture are treated. . . . But upon supposition of a revelation, it is highly credible beforehand we should be incompetent judges of it to a great degree, and that it would contain many things appearing to us liable to great objections in case we judge of it otherwise than by the analogy of nature."[1] And to quote his often-quoted words: "As we are in no sort judges beforehand by what laws or rules, in what degree, or by what means, it were to have been expected that God would naturally instruct us; so, upon supposition of his affording us light and instruction by revelation, additional to what he has afforded us by reason and experience, we are in no sort judges by what methods, and in what proportion, it were to be expected that this supernatural light and instruction would be afforded us."

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[1] *Analogy*, p. 219.

It is well to remember that when the divine book is dismissed by so many of the Higher Critics as an authoritative standard of truth in religion, all the writers in the Bible—prophets and psalmists, together with Christ and all his apostles—are dismissed too; and as we have no record of what Christ was, or of what he did and taught except such as we find in the Bible we are left stranded and bankrupt. Christ's own words bid us "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me" (John 5. 39). But if there is nothing in the Scriptures which "can claim the thoughtful attention of men anl women as being scriptural," then even Christ's own voice as he speaks in the New Testament Scriptures loses its authority. What, then, is left to us?

The position of the Higher Criticism is that certainty in religious matters is to be found not in the Bible but in something outside the Bible. Now what is that? Some will say that our own intelligence is the judge as to the credibility of what the Bible says; anything outside its reach has no authority, either for the intellect or for the conscience. And as "intelligence" is a variable quantity in human lives it seems clear that no generally accepted religious faith is possible; each man will make his own Bible. Principal Griffith-Jones tells us, "It is the testimony of the Christian conscience of all ages that to find Jesus is to find God," and we may find him in the Bible—as the result of certain emotions in ourselves. But since, as Professor Sorley assures us, there is not in the Bible "any infallible authority for doctrinal truth," to go to the Bible to find that infallible

authority—in the Person of Jesus—is to seek the living among the dead. The Higher Critics should come to some arrangement among themselves.

It is perfectly intelligible that when the incarnate Son of God comes among us as our teacher his words and thoughts would move in wider curves than those of our human thoughts. If, indeed, he told us nothing we could not find out for ourselves or could not adequately judge for ourselves his mission as a teacher was unnecessary. But once let the great fact of Christ's divinity and of his office as teacher be accepted and we stand in a new relation to the Scriptures. They judge us; we cannot pretend to judge them. And if Principal Griffith-Jones analyzed his own spiritual experience he would certainly discover that the "triumphant experience" of which he speaks did not *precede* faith in the Person, in the teaching, and the redeeming work of Jesus Christ, which he found recorded in the Bible; that triumphant experience came second. And it is certainly doubtful whether the triumphant experience of believing men and women in all ages will find its inspiration in the attenuated Christ the Higher Criticism presents us; a Christ about whom we may walk, foot rule in hand, and say, "Here, and here, thou art completely wrong, O Christ, and our larger knowledge rebukes thy ignorance." Will that reading of Christ, translated into hymns, reach the high note set in the Te Deum:

"Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ,"

or will it awaken the lyrical gladness of one of Charles Wesley's hymns:

"O for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise;
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of his grace."

What is, for the plain man, the conclusion of the whole matter? He carries no flag in this war. It is a debate which for the most part moves on a plane too high for him. But of some methods of our Higher Critics he *can* judge. It is a question not of scholarship but of common sense. And that the critics are not correct in some of their conclusions, too, is a matter which lies within his knowledge. When they are agreed, and the debate on any question has really reached finality, then the plain man will be cheerfully willing to accept the verdict of scholars. Meanwhile he can certainly wait with calmness the far-off day of decision. He knows very well that no final conclusion on many questions has yet arrived and that it may never arrive. "To assume," says Dr. Robertson Nicoll, "that the particular conclusions which are favored by the majority of scholars at the beginning of the twentieth century will be equally in favor at the beginning of the twenty-first is to be blind to all the lessons of experience. Criticism has changed, and will change, but the Word of God remains."

The plain man, in brief, does not share the alarms of those nervous souls who think that the Christian faith is to be destroyed by a little ink from a German inkpot. His certainty that the Bible is the Word of God—a light to his feet and a lamp to his path—cannot be destroyed by a hasty and probably inaccurate article in a review. Whatever records leap to light, he is sure

that the Word of God will stand. And why is he so sure? Because he knows that the real question about the Bible lies in another than a literary realm. Its "evidences" lie elsewhere. They cannot be decided by purely literary and antiquarian debates.

For the divine book is not a fossil, the remains of some strange form of life dug up from ancient strata and on which geologists and antiquarians may hold learned debate, fitting bone to bone and reconstructing the living form. It is a living book. It has hands and feet and wings. It is "quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." How can a problem in biology be settled by archæological or antiquarian guesses?

Even questions of secular history are not always—or solely—to be determined by such methods. Suppose the question in debate to be whether the Normans, in the eleventh century, conquered England. The proof of the Norman conquest lies in the England of to-day. The record of Domesday Book is on ten thousand title-deeds. The story of William the Conqueror is not a question of contemporaneous records only; it is attested by the whole history of England ever since; by its existing institutions; by the very family names in a thousand English households to-day.

And so, when we discuss the authenticity of New Testament records, we have to take into the argument twenty centuries of Christian history; the existence of the Christian church; the ineffaceable mark on civilization the story of Christ

has made, and the literature it has produced. And yet many Higher Critics insist upon trying what may be called a problem in biology by purely antiquarian tests. "I know the Bible to be true," said Coleridge, "because it *finds* me, in the deepest places of my nature, as no other book does;" and the unlearned man or woman, who has no claims to scholarship, but, like Cowper's heroine, "knows, and only knows, her Bible true," reads the divine book, and finds the inspiration in it is as undeniable as the electric current in the wire is, when the flame of its light is filling the room.

"There are two ways at least," says Professor Denney, "in which the Bible can be read. It can be read with an historical or with a spiritual interest. The historian is concerned with the differences in it. Even when he is aware of a unity which overrules them his attention is concentrated on the sundry times and divers manners in which this unity is revealed. When he admits that God has spoken, his aim is to distinguish as clearly as possible the many parts and many ways in which he has done so; his interest is set not on what God is saying but on what, in circumstances which can never be exactly repeated, God long ago said.

"This is not the point of view of the ordinary Bible reader nor is it that of the church. Their interest in the Bible is spiritual and is therefore concerned with its unity, not with the distinctions in it; they hearken not for what God said to the fathers but for what he is saying to themselves. They do not aim at reaching this through any intellectual process exercised upon the results at-

tained by historical study; they count on enjoying it with an immediacy like that of the senses. They open their Bibles, and expect to see the Light of God as directly as they see the sunshine when they open their eyes in the morning; *and they are confident, too, that they do see it.*"

Who can doubt the sunlight when it lies on the whole landscape, and stains with beauty the leaf of every flower? Beyond the sacred page the plain-minded Christian seeks, and *finds,* the Lord. The Holy Ghost, who moved the far-off apostle or prophet to write the message, floods the mind of the devout reader to-day with light that he may understand what he reads. And as he reads his Bible is strangely and divinely translated into personal terms. Every promise becomes a personal promise; every warning a personal warning; every message a personal message. And the truth of promise, and warning, and message finds constant verification in daily life. So the unlearned Christian hears afar off the clamor of the critics and can afford to smile at it.

SUMMARY

Among the Higher Critics of the day are many entitled by scholarship and character to respect, and in the literature of the Higher Criticism there is much to be read with admiration and profit. But there is also in that literature, taken as a whole, a visible want of the steadying force of a deep and settled faith; faith that has its roots in the Divine Word, and in the character and redeeming work of Jesus Christ. It is too often the literature of men who have not found the truth but who are seeking it, and seeking it without any clear vision of what it is they seek or any sense of divine guidance in the search. It is a literature of guesses, usually of contradictory guesses, of theories that for their fragile structure resemble bubbles and are as transitory as bubbles. It resembles a landscape in which the law of gravitation exists only in patches: there are wide stretches in which there is confusion instead of order, uncertainty instead of certainty.

Much that was said at the Modernist Conference at Cambridge seems to the plain man to deny the Divine Nature of Jesus Christ and to substitute in its stead the divine nature of man. "I should keep the Te Deum," says Dean Inge, "and drop the three Creeds." "Where he (the Modernist) differs from the traditionalist," says Mr. Major, "is in claiming the right and duty under the progressive revelation of the Holy

Spirit to reinterpret and even *to reject any statement in the Creed* which may become incredible as the result of reverent search."[1] Dr. Harris, in his *Creeds or No Creeds*, reads this on the part of Mr. Major as a denial of fixed truths in religion: All beliefs are provisional; the Modernist claims liberty—if sufficient evidence emerged—to teach (1) Theism; (2) Pantheism; (3) Polygamy, the Community of Wives, etc. This is pushing Mr. Major's principles to the extreme, but it is certainly true that the attitude of the Modernists is one of welcome to the unknown if not of mistrust for the known.

Dr. Bethune-Baker, who is Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge and has charge of the instruction of candidates for ordination, has views which have undergone many changes, and his latest view of the Person of Christ is "only a bridge from the past to the present, and," he adds, "we ought perhaps to be content if most of our [Modernist] friends get on it and stay there safely, refusing to follow the more active among us, who are exploring the country beyond" (p. 318). . . . "I can make no use," he said at Cambridge, "of the traditional beliefs in either the miraculous birth or the personal pre-existence of Christ. I do not for a moment suppose that Jesus ever thought of himself as God. Jesus was . . . the actualized ideal of man, man at the end of his evolution, complete." Another view of this curious Professor of Divinity is . . . "[Creatures] are . . . as necessary to the existence of God as he is to theirs. Neither is complete without the

[1] *Modernist*, pp. 302-8.

other. . . . In *us* he lives and moves and has his being."

Mr. Major again, in the *Modern Churchman* for September, 1921, affirms that "the 'Substances' of the Deity and of the Humanity [of Christ] are not two, but one"; that "Perfect Humanity is Deity under human conditions"; that "there is not a vast gulf between the Divine Nature and Human Nature."

Dr. Barnes is always eccentric as a theologian and his latest excursion in theology disposes of the Doctrine of the Trinity. "We identify," he says, "the Lord with the Spirit; when after death his human limitations were transcended, the living Christ became one with the Holy Spirit; in the end I feel no hesitation in affirming that Jesus rose from the dead to become the Living Christ, One with the Holy Spirit."

Dr. Rashdall, a very courageous Modernist, at the Cambridge Conference contended that Jesus "did not claim Divinity;" that a "Divinity of Christ"—if it existed—"did not imply omniscience;" that "All men are partakers of the Divine nature . . . every human soul reveals, reproduces, and incarnates God to some extent." So "we are justified in thinking of God as like Christ . . . and this is the true meaning for us of the doctrine of Christ's divinity." "This" —is the dry comment of Dr. Rashdall's fellow Modernist, Dr. Foakes-Jackson—"this may be good philosophy, but is it historical Christianity?"

The position of Dr. Foakes-Jackson himself in this dance of opposing theories is perhaps the strangest of all. He is shrewd enough to see

that the position of his fellow Modernists is impossible and even absurd. "They present," he says, "a non-miraculous, non-mysterious, easily understood religion. The only question is whether this is Christianity? This worship of the Ideal Man is not Christianity, which is the acceptance of salvation through Christ alone."

But to comfort us we are assured there is "a very small body of theologians in England"—of whom Dr. Foakes-Jackson himself is one—"who are determined to sift the matter to the bottom" —and, in brief, to discover real Christianity! After two thousand years of history, during which the Christ of the gospels has been saving men and reshaping history, its real secret, it seems, is yet to be discovered; we shall know what Christ was, and what he has done and can do for us and for our race, when Dr. Foakes-Jackson and "the very small body of theologians" associated with him have "sifted the matter to the bottom." Meanwhile, little children have to be taught, dying men and women have to be comforted, men in captivity to sin have to be saved, and all this must wait till a very small cluster of theologians in England have "discovered" Christ.

The civilized world during the past few months has been watching an heroic attempt in another realm, the attempt of a little cluster of Englishmen to climb to the highest peak on the globe—Mount Everest. Perhaps never before have such daring heights been reached nor the possibilities of human endurance been so taxed. These adventurers climbed into an attenuated atmosphere some twenty-seven thousand seven hundred feet

above the sea in which they could only breathe with the help of oxygen masks. They fought with snow and tempest, they struggled up the ice-clad slippery heights on which human feet had never before climbed—and it ended in a failure with a loss of many gallant lives. But the adventure is to be undertaken again next year and some day one or two semi-frozen figures will no doubt climb to the highest peak on Mount Everest.

Now this is an adventure, in theological terms, corresponding to the attempt to climb Mount Everest in physical terms, to which Dr. Foakes-Jackson and the few gallant spirits associated with him are committed—the heroic resolve of "a very small body of theologians" in England who "are determined to sift the matter to the bottom" and—at last—find out what Christ is, and where he is, and what he has done and can do for us.

And will they find the Saviour of the world perched on heights where human lungs can scarcely breathe, and shrouded in fog and tempest? Those theologians are looking for the Saviour of the world in the wrong direction. The Saviour of the world is one who seeks *us;* his pierced feet tread every path where human feet stumble on that divine errand. And it is not the scholar by virtue of his scholarship—the humanly wise man, and as the reward of his erudition—who reaches the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth," said Christ himself, "because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so,

Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

It is clear that the Higher Criticism proceeds on a theory of the relation between man and God which in effect denies one of the great redeeming offices of Jesus. "I am come," said Christ, "to seek and to save that which was lost." "I am the Good Shepherd," etc., and all the offices of the Good Shepherd Christ fulfills. He goes after the lost sheep, he does not wait till they have discovered him. He treads with bleeding feet the dark path of death itself to find them. This is the wonder, the mystery, the splendor of the Christian message. It is the expression and proof of the tremendous fact that God wants his fallen creature man more than man wants him; for he is the seeker. Now practically all the discussions by the Higher Criticism of the place of Christ in our redemption proceed on the theory that the sheep have to do the seeking! We have to discover Christ; to find out by the research of learned experts where he is and what he can do for us. His offices and their limitations have to be scientifically ascertained, and by methods impossible to the unlearned. We have, in the New Testament, the records of Christ's teaching for three years, but they are two thousand years distant, and it seems that these teachings are deplorably uncertain, not to say deficient. Their record is untrustworthy; we are told that we cannot be sure that the words of Christ in any certainty have reached us. What are recorded have the mystery of ciphers; sometimes they are of doubtful moral

value, so that we find it necessary to sit in judgment on them and mend or even reject them. Dr. Rashdall, for example, reports confidently that "the Kenosis of Christ stretches through the whole thirty-three years of his earthly career"; so that Christ's ministry as a teacher, as we have said, was marked by the limitations common to all of us. If all this is true it practically amounts to a denial not only of Christ's historical office as the Good Shepherd who came twenty centuries ago to seek the lost sheep of our race but to the conception of any contemporary Christ of to-day actually treading—though with unseen feet—every path of sin and suffering that he may save men.

The Higher Criticism, again, proceeds on the theory that the real discovery of what Christ is, and is seeking to do, is the business of scholars; the unlearned must wait till dead languages are deciphered and experts agree as to their meaning; or the discovery of an ancient manuscript buried and forgotten for centuries may at any moment alter the whole structure of the Christian faith. The whole business is one for the experts; God, that is, must be sought through the intellect and translated into the terms of the intellect.

Now that is a profound misreading of the whole significance of the Christian faith. The intellect has a great office in religion; nothing which is in fundamental quarrel with it can be true. But God's plans out-run the sweep of our minds, or they would not *be* his thoughts; and the point at which God and man meet is that of the submitted will and the living heart. God himself *has* intellect in infinite terms, but he *is* love; and

it is in terms of love and at the point of love that God and man meet. Not the clever brain but the loving heart best understands God. "Beloved," says John, "let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loves is born of God and knows God. He that loveth not knoweth not God: for *God is love.*" Now in these simple words there is hidden a profounder philosophy than Plato knew!

Paul was one of the great intellects of our race, certainly one of the most accomplished scholars of his day; but the famous chapter in the First Epistle to the Corinthians is exactly in the words of John. When in another letter Paul wants to describe how and by what channels in our nature God reveals himself to us, he says, "God who commanded light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ." *In the face of Jesus Christ;* the words seem a flash of poetry. But the profoundest philosophy is in them. The true lens through which we may look into the heart of God is the cross on which the Eternal Son of God died for *us*—the rebels of the universe. The Higher Criticism fails, if not to see this, at least to emphasize this.

In the literature of the Higher Criticism, again, Christ is nearly always contemplated through the perspective of two thousand years. He is not quite a theological corpse to be dissected and discussed, and packed into definitions, but he is certainly a remote figure; what he was or was not, what he did and said, and what of reliability the record possesses—these are the questions that clearly keep busy the pens of the Higher Critics.

But the *contemporary* Christ—the Christ of today—the Christ who said, "Lo, I am with you alway to the end of the world," and keeps his word—this is the Christ which most concerns us. When De Quincey lay dying he asked his daughter to lighten the bed-clothes pressing on his feet. "You know," said the dying man with a touch of mingled pathos and humor, "they are the feet that Christ washed!" And is it not divinely true that in that act the hands that washed the feet of the men whom Jesus knew were about to forsake him—nay, the feet of the man who had already betrayed him—touch, across two thousand years, *all* human feet? The personal touch of Christ is on us all; "closer than breathing" is he. We live and perform every act in his presence. He is touching us every moment.

This is certainly not the Christ chiefly discussed in the literature of the Higher Criticism; and if it were realized by some of the critics themselves it might be suspected that it would curiously affect their utterances. The criticism of a Christ as far from us as the fixed stars seems easy and safe; but suppose, for example, Christ is present and is listening! Suppose a conference of the Higher Critics, such as that lately in session at Cambridge, were being held, and Christ himself being present as a listener; would any speaker have the courage to compliment him by saying that his intelligence while he was on earth was really "above the average"; or another to complain that " he knew little or nothing of Greek philosophy," or that the record of his teaching was so deplorably imperfect that nobody could be sure that one of his actual words had actually

reached us; or yet another to point out that Christ shared the common delusions of his age and race, and in particular claimed to have cast out quite a number of devils which really had no existence? Would not the visible presence of Christ have hushed such comments on his nature and work? And the presence of Christ was there!

The persistent, confident doubts as to miracles Christ is recorded to have performed some years ago would again fall silent if due regard was given to the spiritual miracles he is doing to-day, in the streets and homes of every city in the world and on lonely mission stations under every sky. When considered, the phenomena of converted men and women, of human lives cleansed, of human tempers changed, are "miracles" verified and attested in innumerable lives. For the spiritual universe as surely as the physical is under the realm of law; the whole universe of God is a unit; and the change of that most stubborn thing in the world, the very *character* of a man, is a miracle far more wonderful than that which gave sight to blind eyes and cleansed with a touch the flesh of a leper. And yet they are, if not denied, treated as if of no value!

The Higher Criticism, to sum up, is a perfectly legitimate branch of Bible study; it has rendered at some points real and great service to the Christian faith, and may well continue to render further service. But it visibly has some great and deadly perils, of which the less wise of the Higher Critics at least are mournfully unconscious, but of whose existence the Higher Criticism itself gives too many proofs. The catalogue in it of

things forgotten, of truths seen askew or out of focus or even in contradiction to the plain meaning of the Bible, is such that the common sense of the plain man can judge of them with confidence, and—in some case at least—can dismiss them with a smile.